

## CHEMICAL DEPENDENCIES



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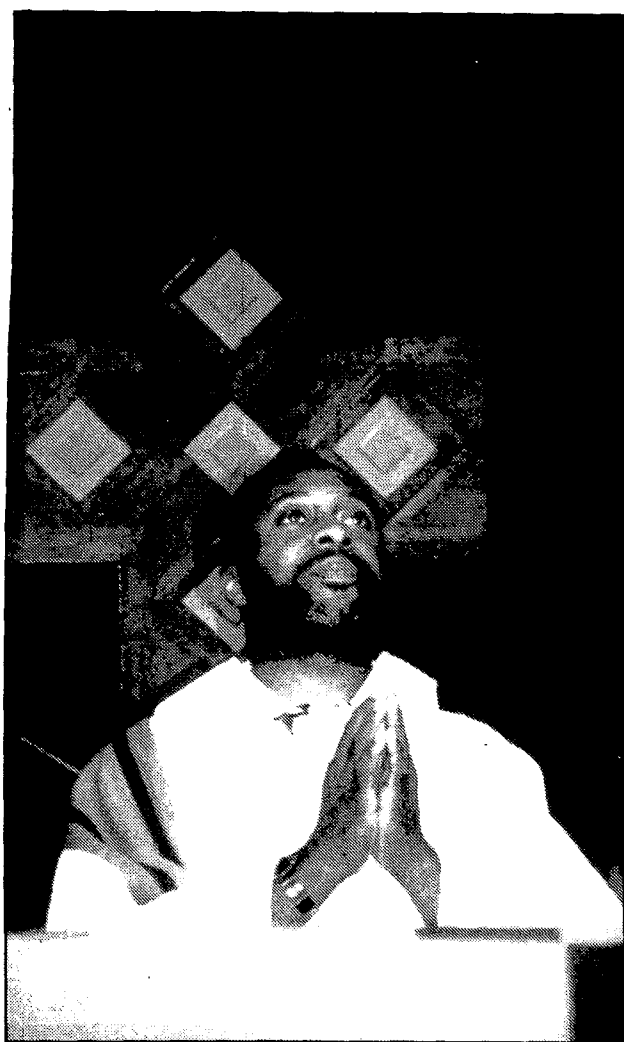
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Rev. George Augustus Stallings Jr.

## Countering Catholic blackout in D.C.

By Vicki Kemper

Unlike Rev. George Augustus Stallings Jr., the charismatic black priest whose recent establishment of an independent African-American Catholic congregation in Washington, D.C., has received worldwide attention, Carlos Harvin has not appeared on the Oprah Winfrey show or graced the front page of *USA Today*. Few people knew or cared that on July 18, Harvin, under duress, resigned from his job as coordinator of the Washington archdiocese's decimated black youth ministry.

Likewise, when Detroit Cardinal Edmund Szoka announced plans last fall to close 43 inner-city parishes because they were not contributing enough cash to church coffers—a move that affected some 10,000

parishioners, most of them poor, black, elderly or ethnic minorities—few people outside of Detroit took notice. And when Cardinal James Hickey, archbishop of Washington, D.C., announced last spring the closure of four of the area's five Catholic high schools, few people realized the anguish and anger felt by black students and their parents.

So when Father Stallings, in defiance of his bishop and church law, created the African-American Imani Temple and offered its first Mass on July 2, many observers saw little more than a rebellious priest. The Catholic hierarchy, including all 13 black bishops and many lay Catholics, some of them black, have denounced Stallings' move as a "personal crusade."

Washington's Cardinal Hickey and a surprising number of other Catholic leaders have, since Stallings' action, been quick to acknowledge racism within the church. Archbishop John May of St. Louis, president of the National Conference of Catholic Bishops, has even pledged renewed church "energies and resources to address black Catholics' concerns."

But Hickey and other Stallings critics insist that Catholics must combat church racism from "within the family" through regular church structures. Writing on the *Washington Post's* op-ed page on July 13, Hickey said, "The task of combating racism in both church and society belongs not simply to self-appointed leaders, but to all believers."

Yet one cannot understand the front-page story of Stallings' Imani Temple and the more than 2,000 black Catholics who have begun to worship there weekly without also knowing something of the untold stories of church conflict and the long, hidden history of racism and the virtually all-white decision-making structures within the U.S. Catholic Church. Like inner-city parishioners in Detroit (many who now hold Mass in home basements), as well as displaced high school students in Washington and the disillusioned leaders and members of Washington's black youth ministry, many Catholics have grown tired of a church that reflects too little of their cultural experience. They are weary of having limited influence in the church decisions that affect their lives and ministries. Many black Catholics applaud Stallings' actions, and some black priests in Washington are quietly encouraging their parishioners to support Imani Temple.

**Preaching to prelates:** "I don't know what is wrong with a people deciding they are going to move toward self-determination," Stallings said at a July 16 African-American Mass at Imani Temple. Dressed in a cream-colored robe decorated with the green, red and black colors of African liberation, Stallings preached not only to his audience, but also to the Roman Catholic church.

"We're asking for compassion," Stallings said. "We're asking for understanding. But maybe you can't show compassion because you've never been there.... You've never been beaten. You've never been sold into slavery.... You've never been through what we've been through.... You say to keep on waiting, Roman Catholic Church, but what do you know about waiting? Waiting for what?"

Rev. Edward B. Branch, another veteran black priest, agrees that black Catholics have waited long enough and says he is "generally in favor" of Stallings' Imani Temple. "I think it will be a catalyst to get things going that we've been trying to do for 25 years. In 1967 the Black Priests Association considered establishing a black Catholic rite, but they decided not to." While the number of black priests and bishops has increased, only 50 to 60 of some 300 black priests are church pastors, and only two of 13 black bishops preside over dioceses, while the other 11 are auxiliaries.

Black membership in the Catholic Church has also increased, to some 2 million out of a total of 55 million. But Branch says the Catholic Church is "still a colonialized church. It's an Irish-Catholic ghetto, and all the rest of us are just visiting."

In Branch's view, the church's fundamental problem is not racism but the lack of structures and procedures that promote power-sharing between leadership and laity, majority and minority ethnic groups. "Racism simply aggravates the poor structural system," Branch says.

Stallings, who was pastor of St. Teresa of Avila church in Washington for 12 years and left that post a year ago to become archdiocesan evangelist, knows all about the

system. He knew that a new parish could not be established without the bishop's leadership; he knew that a priest may not take up new duties without the bishop's consent. But Stallings was tired of waiting; he wanted to establish an African-American congregation. When Stallings and Hickey couldn't agree on a new assignment for Stallings, Hickey relieved Stallings of his post as archdiocesan evangelist. And when Stallings proceeded to establish Imani Temple, Hickey suspended him from his priestly duties.

**Ambitious plans:** But Stallings, who often says "the people have spoken" in favor of his enterprise, remains undaunted. With attendance at two Masses each Sunday totaling more than 2,000 and contributions averaging about \$13,000 a week, Stallings is already planning to expand his operations to include a second African-American congregation and a 6,000-seat church building, a 12-grade Imani Academy, a day care center, a community center, permanent housing for the elderly and temporary shelter for the homeless. Stallings, who calls Imani Temple a Catholic congregation, hopes to accomplish all of this "in communion" with the Catholic Church.

Any negotiation with the church for reconciliation must include "our right to religious, spiritual, liturgical and theological self-determination," Stallings says. Such dialogue must also include "the interpretation of African-American worship styles, the development of an indigenous African-American clergy and hierarchical leadership and the inclusion and full participation of African-Ameri-

## INSIDE STORY

cans in the archdiocesan decision-making process on every level."

But Stallings' critics insist that much of his agenda is already being implemented. The Gospel Mass, a blend of Catholicism and traditional black Protestant worship, was developed about 20 years ago and is common in many black parishes in Washington and across the country.

Still, the Imani Temple provides black Catholics with a way to work from the bottom up, rather than wait for crumbs to fall down from the top, says Father Branch. "I think the project is worth trying, because we've tried it the other way."

Meanwhile, Carlos Harvin, tired of directing a black youth program that received no funding from the archdiocese, has resigned from his job and plans to join Stallings' new program. "I feel called to help build a youth ministry at Imani Temple," he says.

Whatever may come of Stallings' Imani Temple, the welfare of blacks within the Catholic Church is sure to improve because of it. And, perhaps most important, George Stallings has provided hope and inspiration to millions of Catholics sitting in the pews—blacks, women and other minority groups—and one can only wonder what their empowerment will bring.

**Vicki Kemper**, former news editor of *Sojourner* magazine, is a Washington, D.C., writer.

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(ISSN 0160-5992)

Published 41 times a year: weekly except the first week of January, first week of March, last week of November, last week of December; bi-weekly in June through the first week in September by Institute for Public Affairs, 1300 W. Belmont, Chicago, IL 60657, (312) 472-5700. The entire contents of *In These Times* are copyright © 1989 by Institute for Public Affairs, and may not be reproduced in any manner, either in whole or in part, without permission of the publisher. Second-class postage paid at Chicago, IL, and at additional mailing offices. Postmaster: Send address changes to *In These Times*, 1912 Debs Ave., Mt. Morris, IL 61054. This issue (Vol. 13, No. 31) published Aug. 2, 1989, for newsstand sales Aug. 2-29, 1989.

## Hot and bothered

You may have noticed that this issue of *In These Times* is a little thicker than usual (though we hope no more thick-headed). Due to moving and construction delays, the central air conditioning in our new building hasn't been hooked up, rendering our offices a pressure cooker for overheated humans and temperamental machines. Rather than risk the health of our one-of-a-kind workers and the breakdown of expensive computers, we have decided to forego our next issue. We do so reluctantly, as *In These Times* has never before skipped an issue in nearly 13 years of publication. The next issue will be dated August 30 and will kick off our regular weekly publication schedule. With your continued support *In These Times* will eventually number 32 pages each issue, but for now we beg your indulgence.



By Diana Johnstone

PARIS

**T**HE FRENCH COULDN'T AGREE HOW TO commemorate the 200th anniversary of their Revolution, so they put on an image show. Leaders of the seven richest countries don't know how to solve the problems of the world they claim to lead, so they put on an image show. Advocates of the forgotten poor didn't know what to do either, so they also put on an image show. All this happened in mid-July in Paris. Whether all these images mean anything is a question nagging these postmodern times.

**The revolution show:** President François Mitterrand wanted to use the Bastille bicentennial to unify France around a single aspect of the Revolution that divided it: human rights, as expressed in the August 1789 Declaration of the Rights of Man. The flood of platitudes let loose by this noble intention did not entirely quell France's habitual political bickering, and celebrations were cut back due to lack of cooperation from the right. Instead of a world's fair comparable to the centennial that put up the Eiffel Tower in 1889, France invited the leaders of the seven "leading industrial democracies"—or Group of Seven (G-7) as they call themselves—to come and look important. Then, realizing the image problems of inviting the world's privileged to celebrate a revolt against privilege, leaders of poor countries were allowed to come and mill around with the rich during the parades. The biggest embarrassment among those who showed up was Zaire's CIA-sponsored dictator Joseph Desiré Mobutu Sese Seko, known for his familiar leopard-skin cap and the estimated \$15 billion he has stolen from his country.

With Margaret Thatcher typecast as Marie-Antoinette, the leaders of the privileged seven gathered on the balcony of the Crillon Hotel to watch a long festive parade with a lot of Africans in it—big floats of Senegalese and Guineans, but also African-Americans from the U.S. Mitterrand fans got the message in the contrast between the rich on the balcony and the poor in the streets. Meanwhile, Mitterrand prodded his guests to relieve Third World debt and to open a North-South dialogue with their Third World counterparts. Nothing really happened, but the show undoubtedly enhanced the French President's image in France and in the Third World as the G-7 leader with the best intentions.

A week earlier, the popular singer Renaud called for a demonstration followed by a free concert at the Place de la Bastille to protest celebrating the Revolution with the leaders of the seven rich countries. The march was on behalf of the Third World, today's "Third Estate." Whereas recent May Day parades in Paris have brought out mostly Third World immigrants, especially Marxist-Leninist Turks, Renaud's pro-Third World parade actually brought French leftists back into the streets. The presidential entourage seemed mightily irked that Renaud would try to steal the pro-Third World image on the very spot consecrated (by a large and scarcely finished new opera house) to the glory of the Mitterrand presidency.

The "Summit of the Arc" was the 15th annual economic confab of the G-7 (the U.S., Japan, West Germany, France, Britain, Italy and Canada, plus Jacques Delors representing the European Community). The final

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## The French Revolution's not what it used to be

statement was the longest ever issued—over 6,000 words—almost half devoted to environmental concerns. Both West Germany's Helmut Kohl and Britain's Margaret Thatcher must soon face voters sensitized to "green" issues. The enumeration of ecological disasters showed that word has at last reached the top. But the fact that the steady economic growth and integration (through debt) of the Third World into the capitalist market promoted by G-7 meetings have led to ecological collapse seems not to have penetrated. For the world leaders as usual called for "sustained growth" and set as their three main tasks economic growth, "further integration of developing countries into the world economy" and the need to "preserve better" (yes, "better") the global ecological balance. Rather than face the bad news that the first two efforts are directly opposed to the third, the seven pinned their hopes on a hypothetical "technological breakthrough" that may "reconcile economic growth and environmental policies." Let the free market economy eat the planet cake and have it too.

"The Other Economic Summit" (TOES) was first organized to counter the 1984 G-7 in London. This year it came up with a device certain to attract a glimpse of attention from the media: the First Annual Summit of Seven Peoples among the Poorest in the World. The representatives of the seven poorest nations were all grass-roots organizers in non-governmental or opposition organizations. Serge Cherniguin from the Philippines has to sleep in a different place every night to evade assassins, since, inspired by liberation theology, he quit his job as plantation overseer to become a leader of the National Sugar Workers in the island of Negros. Others were women's health organizer Buli Rokeya of Bangladesh, Orlando Melgueiros Da Silva of the union of indigenous nations in Amazonia, Tomas Vieira Mario from Mozambique, Daniel Henrys from Haiti, Mariam Ouattara from Burkina Faso and peasant organizer Salumu Sonya from Zaire.

There is no lack of peoples who could

claim to be among the poorest, and next year's summit will select seven others. This year's sampling was meant to emphasize the new poverty of "exclusion" resulting from imposition of the Western development model on traditional societies.

**The new poverty:** The "Seven Poor" bore witness to the effects. Mariam Ouattara said the postcolonial emphasis on exporting everything from farm produce to labor had led to degradation of living conditions in her sub-Saharan Sahel country. Unable to cope, men give up and shift all responsibility to the women, who are worse off than ever. "Poverty is our destiny," she said, "but the question is how we can have dignity in our poverty. Dignity is very important to us in our culture." The Western development model takes it all away.

Salumu Sonya said taxes were forcing the African peasant to sell his land and become a dependent wage earner in the international monetary system. Traditional village solidar-

### As the poor stewed, the privileged flocked to Paris to fete a revolt against privilege.

ity was a better way of life. "People in the villages are getting together and asking, why are we being drawn into an unbearable situation?" he said.

Europeans at the TOES meeting stressed that the new poverty marginalizing millions in the Third World was spreading in the rich countries, and was indeed a result of the same development model.

The dominant development model divides societies into a "dual society" where the growing gap between rich and poor makes a mockery of democracy. It is "an illusion to think that integration into the world market on the basis of economic liberalism will automatically set off a process of political liberalization," argued historian Jean Ches-

neaux. "The example of China indicates the contrary." He added that including "black Pinochets" in official photos of meetings of heads of state was no substitute for a real North-South dialogue.

American writer Susan George called debt a new war against the Third World. "When everyone has to export to pay the debt, we've lots of cheap produce in the Northern countries," she said. Since 1982, more money has been flowing from the poor South to the rich North than the other way. Interest payments have more than equaled the original loans without ever "repaying" them.

**Pyramid schemes:** A man from Benin noted that leaders of poor countries have more money in Swiss banks than leaders of rich countries. Some 20 percent of the debt has gone to pay for arms. The debt finances the armies and police forces that protect the interests of the multinationals, or pays for "pharaonic projects" to enhance the local dictators' prestige. "Should we cancel Mobutu's debt?" asked Susan George. "What guarantee do we have that his people would benefit?" Africans attending the meetings applauded her suggestion that debt cancellation be turned into an "instrument of liberation," although it was not spelled out how this might work.

The final declaration of the "Seven Poor" challenged the legitimacy and demanded cancellation of Third World debt. "That debt, the declaration said, 'expresses forced integration into the world economic and financial system. The debt crisis is the consequence of a strategy we did not choose.' And thus the fate of nominally sovereign countries is determined in the financial capitals of New York, Tokyo, London and Frankfurt.

World poverty is not a leftover from the past that can be eventually eliminated by global modernization, the declaration added. Rather, it is a result of that very modernization. For the world is being "unified not through homogenization but through exclusion, on the world scale and even inside the rich countries."

Rich and poor alike must reconsider the relationship between development and well-being, it said. "This is all the more obvious since deterioration of the environment underlines the impossibility of extending the dominant model to the whole of the Earth. A ferocious Darwinism, in the North as well

Continued on page 30



# INSHORT

By Joel Bleifuss

## Culture crusade—a new world coming

The arts in America are under attack, and news from the front is not good. Last week the Senate passed a bill that would implement the House's July 12, 361-to-65 decision to cut \$45,000 from the National Endowment for the Arts (NEA) budget to punish the agency for supporting exhibits by the late erotic photographer Robert Mapplethorpe and Andres Serrano, creator of the photo *Piss Christ*; ban for five years NEA funding for both the Institute of Contemporary Art in Philadelphia, which organized the Mapplethorpe exhibit, and the Southeastern Center for Contemporary Art in Winston-Salem, N.C., which provided a grant to Serrano; transfer \$400,000 from the NEA visual arts program to programs that support folk and local arts; ban the NEA from funding "obscene or indecent materials, including but not limited to depictions of sadomasochism, homoeroticism, the exploitation of children, or individuals engaged in sex acts; or material which denigrates the objects or beliefs of the adherents of a particular religion or non-religion"; and allocate \$100,000 for an "outside party" to do a study of the NEA grant-making system. What Congress members are supporting this legislation? Rep. Pat Schroeder (D-CO) is one. She voted to cut \$45,000 from the NEA. Sen. Barbara Mikulski (D-MD) is another. She sat by silently as the Senate's attack on the arts passed through the Appropriations Committee on which she sits. Meanwhile in Illinois, Republican Gov. Jim Thompson stood by the flag and all it now flies for. He decided not to veto the Illinois legislature's decision to abolish public support for both the School of the Art Institute of Chicago and the Illinois Arts Alliance, a Chicago-based group that went on record defending the school and the First Amendment. So, what's going on? Are these random expressions of reactionary zeal? Or do they har-binger a cultural inquisition? *In These Times* asked the following members of the art world for their thoughts.

**Leon Golub**, artist, New York. "It may not have started this way, but this cultural crusade becomes potentially an agenda of the right. We've had the right's economic agenda, and we've had the right-to-life movement. First it was economics, then biology, and now here comes the cultural agenda. Certain types of people on the right have always resented and feared the implications of modernism, especially its more libertarian attitudes, its belief in freedom of expression. The current controversies over artworks have allowed right-wing demagogues to make emotional appeals that play to these fears. As a result, the right is now one leg up in its attempt to develop a cultural attitude that is in line with their other agendas. These guys are all ready to go. They leap into it, not just to win elections, but as part of a whole ideological fight. Like this Andres Serrano piece *Piss Christ*, it arouses, or at least is used to arouse people in such a way as to get them upset. This is hard to counteract, especially in Congress. I've noticed how cautious and even frightened liberal Congress members have gotten. Not too many were willing to stand up on this issue. They are afraid of losing their jobs."

**Barbara Gladstone**, gallery owner, New York. "The whole thing is totally reprehensible. Rep. Dick Armey (R-TX) said National Endowment for the Arts funding should be cut because the people were not consulted on how money was spent. But I wasn't consulted on how our money was spent to aid the contras, to bankroll HUD developers and build a nuclear arsenal. The hypocrisy is incredible. This is an attempt at censorship, and any attempt at censorship is a threat to everyone. Totalitarian regimes always attempt to suppress images. And they always use the same word, 'degenerate.' In 1937 at the Kunstverein in Munich, the Nazis sponsored a show of degenerate art that they considered detrimental to the state and dangerous to look at. It was a sign of what was happening at the time. The current attack on the arts is symbolic of wider repression. The right is very well organized. People aren't perceiving how threatening this all is. For example, while the first inroad may not disturb a particular individual, the next instance of censorship does, but by then you can't stop it any more."

**Susan Wyatt**, executive director, Artists Space, a non-profit gallery and artist service organization in New York. On July 11, the day before Congress voted to cut \$45,000 from the National Endowment for the Arts, more than 400 artists gathered at Artists Space to write letters and discuss how best to respond to the current inquisition. "This has escalated in a very frightening way. I don't know what the implications are for the National Endowment for the Arts. The \$45,000 cut is not a large cut, but it does

## Ochoa and North: peas from a pod

The U.S. Marines and the Cuban Revolutionary Armed Forces have a problem—where to find a few good men. Their stars—it seems—have self-destructed in midcareer.

In his recent trial, Cuban Gen. Arnaldo Ochoa Sanchez was linked to a rotogravure of unsavory characters—including Panamanian Gen. Manuel Noriega and Medellin cocaine magnate Pablo Escobar. But no one stooped so low as to publicly connect Ochoa to Lt. Col. Oliver North. Although the two men may never have been closer than the same page of the *New York Times*, their paths have crossed. Ochoa and North coached opposing teams in Nicaragua and Angola. And the rise and meteoric disintegration of their careers followed the same script. Both men operated in an atmosphere of nebulous ends and nefarious means.

The two officers rose through the ranks on parallel waves of patriotism and military valor. Their superiors recognized their talents and rewarded them. Both mucked around in increasingly tainted waters. Both got dirty.

The anti-communist and fundamentalist Christian North joined the armed forces and served in Vietnam, where his courage and take-charge attitude got him promoted to lieutenant colonel.

Ochoa, a teenager when he joined

the struggle against military dictator Fulgencio Batista, became a dedicated communist. He volunteered for internationalist duty in Angola, Ethiopia and Nicaragua.

Both young officers earned reputations for implacability, resourcefulness and concern for the troops under their commands.

When the Reagan administration set up secret networks in the National Security Council, North was the natural point man. And when Castro approved special operations, he trusted Ochoa to deliver. Like Reagan, Castro—unwittingly or not—provided Ochoa and others the perfect cover to establish secret, self-financing business networks.

The autonomy and discretion that characterize covert operations tested the moral mettle of communist and capitalist alike—a test both Ollie and Arnie flunked.

Reagan's see-no-evil attitude allowed North and his pals to sell arms to an avowed enemy of the U.S. and channel the profits to mercenaries. At home North knocked on doors, selling the Founding Fathers for ammunition to shoot at Nicaraguan troops advised by Ochoa. The channel leaked, and North's cohorts pocketed thousands and thousands of dollars.

Ochoa used the Cuban intelligence network to smuggle diamonds and ivory out of Africa, short-change Angola and Nicaragua, two of Cuba's staunchest allies, and do \$3.4 million worth of business with the Medellin

cartel.

Castro had repeatedly, vehemently denied that drugs flowed through Cuba on their way from Colombia to the U.S. And Castro, like Reagan, was caught in the uncomfortable position of either asserting ignorance or admitting duplicity. Castro and the Cuban Communist Party opted for a prompt, unpromising and highly visible response. Cuba's 47 generals and 29 members of the Council of State convicted Ochoa of "betraying" the revolution and sentenced him to be shot. The Cuban public definitely does not consider Ochoa a hero.

In contrast, North lost the right to appear in public dressed in heavy medal. U.S. District Judge Gerhard Gesell said he didn't want to increase North's already jaded view of the Constitution and sentenced him to a three-year suspended sentence, two years of probation, a nominal fine and 1,200 hours of community service. A well-heeled and vocal minority still revere North as their hero, paying him big bucks to grace their podiums.

Neither Gesell nor Cuban Chief Justice Escalona accused the commanders in chief of these wayward soldiers. Neither fingered the shady operations and secret systems that spawned North, Ochoa and their cohorts in crime.

—Nan Elsasser and Nelson Valdés



Sue Coe, artist, New York.



## Closing the door on death

The 23-year-old author of the following story left Vietnam in 1975. He is an editor at Pacific News Service.

When someone dies in the convalescent home where my grandmother lives, the nurses rush to close all the patients' doors. As a policy, death is not to be seen at the home, but she can always tell when it visits. The series of doors being slammed shut remind her of the firecrackers during Tet.

The nurses' efforts to shield death are more comical to my grandmother than reassuring. "Those old ladies die so often," she quips in Vietnamese, "everyday's like New Year."

Still, it is lonely to die in such a place. I imagine some wasted old body under a white sheet being carted silently through the empty corridor on its way to the morgue. In America a person may be born surrounded by loved ones, but in old age one is often left to take the last leg of life's journey alone.

Perhaps that is why my grandmother talks mainly now of her hometown of Bac-Lieu, its river and rich green rice fields. Having lost everything during the war, she can now offer me only her distant memories: life was not disjointed back home, one lived in a gentle rhythm with the land, people died in their homes surrounded by neighbors and relatives. No one shut the door.

So it goes....The once gentle, con-

nected world of the past is but the language of dreams. In this society of disjointed lives, we are swept along and have little time for spiritual comfort. Instead of relying on neighbors and relatives, on the river and land, we deal with the language of materialism: overtime, escrow, stress, down payment, credit cards, tax shelter. Instead of going to the temple to pray for good health, we religiously pay life and health insurance.

My grandmother's children and grandchildren share a certain pang of guilt. After a stroke paralyzed her, we could no longer keep her at home. And although we visit her regularly, we are not living up to the standard of filial piety expected in the old country. My father silently grieves, and my mother suffers from headaches. (Does she see herself in such a home in a decade or two?)

Once, a long time ago, living in Vietnam we used to stare death in the face. The war in many ways had heightened our sensibilities toward living and dying. I can still hear the wails of widows and grieving mothers. Though the fear of death and dying is a universal one, the Vietnamese did not hide from it. Instead we dwelled in its tragedy.

American popular culture translates death with something like nauseating humor. People laugh and scream at blood-and-guts movies. The wealthy freeze dead relatives in liquid nitrogen. Cemeteries are places of business, complete with

colorful brochures. There are even drive-by funerals where you don't have to get out of your car to pay your respects to the deceased.

This does not, however, assist us in evading suffering. The reality of old age is apparent in the convalescent home. An old man, once an accomplished concert pianist, is now rendered helpless by arthritis. Every morning he sits staring at the piano. One feeble woman who outlived her children keeps repeating, "My son will take me home." Then there are those mindless bedridden bodies kept alive through a series of tubes and pulsating machines.

But despair is not newsworthy. Death itself must be embellished or satirized or deep-frozen in order to catch the public's attention.

Last week on her 82nd birthday I went to see my grandmother. She smiled her sweet sad smile.

"Where will you end up in your old age?" she asked me, her mind as sharp as ever.

The memories of monsoon rain and tropical sun and relatives and friends came to mind. Not here, not here, I wanted to tell her. But the soft moaning of a patient next door and the smell of alcohol wafting from the sterile corridor brought me back to reality.

"Anywhere is fine," I told her instead, trying to keep up with her courageous spirit. "All I'm asking for is that they don't shut my door."

—Andrew Lam  
Pacific News Service

set a precedent for Congress intervening with specific grants. That is a bad precedent. I also think the particular works in question, Mapplethorpe's and Serrano's, are difficult to defend for people who don't understand contemporary art. The way they have been described in the press gives people who haven't seen the work incorrect impressions. They don't understand that art is a form of speech and that this is basically a free speech issue. I find it scary. I also find it scary that not too many of the major art museums are doing anything about it. And I wonder why PEN [the writers' organization] and the actors' unions haven't come out more strongly. This is not only a visual arts issue. Of course part of the problem is that the visual arts community is poorly organized."

**Mary Jane Jacob**, chief curator, Museum of Contemporary Art, Los Angeles. "I think museums should take a position. The most effective approaches to dealing with this have not yet been defined. This is something that we are going to be struggling with for a long time to come, even after the visibility dies down.

The issues and reactions that have come about in the last few weeks should not be quickly forgotten. Some artists will take these up as subjects for their work. Supporting them and providing a forum in which they can pose their point of view on this situation is one way museums can become active. I am outraged and disturbed by grouping together different types of work—political and sexual—into a single moral argument that demands as its only resolution censorship. It is being done with a great deal of ignorance as to the actual intention of works of art, the history of the role of art, not to mention basic definitions of art. The works of these particular artists have become scapegoats of an agenda that has as yet not been fully revealed to us. It is a very unfortunate position for us as Americans to have our culture presented in such reactionary terms."

**Catherine Edelman**, gallery owner, Chicago. "My fear is not only for the moment, but for the future as far as the quality of artwork that will be produced. The Serrano and Mapplethorpe controversy will not only affect who gets grants in the future but the quality of younger artists' work. They may see this as a guideline for what is now acceptable to the NEA. This kind of censorship certainly doesn't promote the highest quality art and will obviously translate into the type of work that gets submitted for these grants. Further, the Mapplethorpe controversy stems from deep-rooted homophobia. There is a generation of people who don't understand what is going on in America. Their actions aren't limited to the arts. They support pro-life legislation, sodomy laws, military funding—it is all being done by in my mind a right-wing male-dominated hierarchy."

**Robert Storr**, art critic, New York. "The long-prepared backlash against the experimental arts that developed in the '60s and '70s and art made by people who operate outside the commercial art world is on the verge of becoming official policy. You are seeing a very dramatic break, artists like Helen Frankenthaler who sits on the NEA taking sides with conservative politicians against other artists. Since the beginning of the Reagan era Hilton Kramer, editor of *The New Criterion* and a longtime *New York Times* critic has been leading the charge, attacking museums, artists, critics and the NEA in the name of culture. Kramer is a right-wing populist. The author of the book *The Revenge of the Philistines*, he ostensibly defended high culture against uninformed taste. Increasingly, however, it is evident that he is the revenge of the philistines. The line of *The New Criterion* crowd has been that art should be above politics, but that it is not a political statement to say that. Kramer belongs to a generation of people who view the separation of high and popular culture in extremely narrow-minded terms. He has consistently opposed people involved in socially responsive art, including community arts projects that have given voice to blacks, Hispanics and women. Like many intellectuals who championed high culture against middle-brow culture in the '30s and '40s—in particular those people associated with *Partisan Review*—Kramer's arguments have devolved into a defense of conservative culture against anything that moves. The arts community has to prepare itself for a very long struggle. It will be trench by trench. Take the case of the School of the Art Institute of Chicago, which made its reputation on art that was transgressive and regularly violated standards of good taste. Now the school won't even let student work show inside the confines of the school unless it is approved by the administration. Yet schools are the very place where art students are to test limits and debate results. If you can't do that even in art school, things are pretty serious."



**Robbie Conal** for the past week has been plastering Los Angeles, Chicago, New York, Washington and San Francisco with his latest contribution to the urban landscape. The portraits shown here can be found on Chicago's "New Wave Rush Street" at the corner of Sheffield and Roscoe. Says Conal, "Republicans are the party animals of the '80s—sex, drugs, rock & roll. Bush presents himself as the yuppie president and his administration as a gray flannel business-as-usual bureaucracy. It's smooth water, but you have to look at the sharks that are breaking the surface and what's going on underneath. When I think of John Tower—his unpleasant totalitarian personality, his sex and his booze scandals—it's like a safe sex poster. On the other side of Bush is the undersea creature of the deep South, Lee Atwater. He's a David Duke-style, three-piece-pinstripe-suit, gentler, kinder shark. And Bush, lest we forget—there is his relationship with Noriega and what we are never going to find out about how much he knew about Iran-contra." As for the current culture war, "In the long run this is going to be good for the arts, in the sense that it brings the art institutional establishment down to earth where it can't pretend that it's above the political realities of our time, down to the streets where it belongs."

Posters by Robbie Conal; photo by Miles DeCoster



By David Moberg

CHICAGO

## This Sears sale item is not in the catalogue

IN THE LATE AFTERNOON SUNLIGHT THE 110-story Sears Tower glistens from afar like a giant pillar of gold, a monument to the fortunes made over the past century in creating and catering to a mass consumer market. When Sears built the tower in the early '70s, executives thought it only fitting that the world's largest retailer should occupy the world's tallest building.

Now Sears is selling the building and—after provoking an intergovernmental bidding war of states offering the company public subsidies—is moving most of its nearly 8,000 employees to a remote northwestern Chicago suburb, Hoffman Estates. Sears is still—barely—No. 1 in retailing, but its share of the market is slipping sharply. The building sale and the move are only small parts of a dramatic remaking of Sears.

**Sears as a symbol:** The changes at Sears have big real-life consequences for the employees—who face increasing job pressures and more drastic cutbacks in employment—and for Chicago. But they are also symbolic of major trends in the economy.

Here is the once arrogantly impregnable and highly insular "big store" now humbled by upstart, once-scorned competitors, its old middle-class market declining, the forces of consumerism it stoked now undermining its foundations. Here is a multinational giant, regarded as an American institution, forced into defensive actions by the specter of takeover bids. Here is a company that once tried to spread the benefits of its awesome purchasing power around the country now engaging in fashionable corporate blackmail to get the biggest possible public giveaway while continuing to abandon inner-city minority communities.

Sears has played a central role in the emergence of the U.S. mass consumer market. As historian Alfred Chandler has argued, from the middle 19th century on, the railroad and the telegraph made the mass market possible, first with the grain exchanges, then with wholesale jobbers of merchandise. Chicago quickly became the nexus of the new mass market economy. In the exploding big cities, department stores displaced specialized shops. Soon mail order firms targeted farmers. A little more than a century ago, Richard Sears and Alvah Roebuck first marketed watches by mail, later such new-fangled items as sewing machines and cream separators. Then retail chains like S.S. Kresge went after small towns.

When the rural market declined with the agricultural recession of the '20s, Sears shifted gears and established the nation's largest chain of stores. It hoped to provide everything needed by the middle 80 percent of the population. It thrived with the post-World War II boom in housing construction as families loaded up on Kenmore appliances.

**Sears no-bucks:** But the world changed. Starting in the early '70s, real income growth per capita stagnated, and if families made any gains it was because two parents were working. After 1979 economic inequality increased sharply, and much of the stressed middle class slipped downward. As home ownership became less affordable, Sears' fortunes slipped.

Coinciding with this erosion of Sears' traditional customer base, "retail trade was be-

coming polarized," according to Northwestern University professor of marketing Louis W. Stern. "There were experts in warehouse technology with the ability to move goods rapidly and efficiently and set up no-frills stores like K mart, Wal-Mart and Price Mart. On the other pole were the specialty stores, highly targeted, classification-dominant, lifestyle-oriented like Toys R Us, The Limited, Crate and Barrel, and Athlete's Foot. People

### ECONOMICS

became enamoured with pizzazz, service, a tailored assortment of goods. Or they said, 'If we're not going to get that, we'll go where it's really cheap.' It was a high-touch, high-tech world, and Sears fit into nothing. It was the blob sitting in the middle."

Ironically Sears had triumphed with its catalogues and stores by mastering the earlier technologies that permitted it to maximize turnover, reduce costs and make high profits on low margins through huge volume and centralized purchasing. But K mart, Wal-Mart and other discounters began beating Sears at its own game, maintaining lower prices through tighter inventory control. The discounters reflected the new computer technology, much as Sears had reflected railroads and the telegraph.

The discounters also cut costs by providing minimal service by a poorly paid, part-time workforce. Sears, by contrast, had long tried to develop in its employees a familial sense of career identity with the company. Sears' overhead costs even now run 50 percent higher than those of its discount competitors.

**No go without a logo:** Sears also began losing ground to the specialty retailers. Instead of being everything to everybody, as Sears tried to be, Highland, Fretter and Circuit City concentrated on brand name electronics. They offered greater variety (instead of Sears' house brands), low prices and a specialized image.

In other products, especially clothing, Sears was totally outclassed. The mass consumerism that Sears pioneered had created a mentality that Sears could no longer satisfy. Consumerism always flourished in part as an outlet for self-expression. And increasingly, customers weren't interested in simply practical, sensible but undistinctive mass-produced items. They wanted to buy a bundle of symbols as much as a useful

article made of cloth or plastic or metal—a little alligator on the shirt, Nike on the shoe, Sony on the Walkman.

Americans, especially the "baby boomers," increasingly found their identity not in the old particularities of region or ethnicity or in the generic Americanism of the postwar mass market of Sears. They sought identity in terms of their "lifestyle" and its attendant purchases: I shop, therefore I am. And they wanted shopping to be an experience, fun, entertaining. Sears could hardly compete with spending a day at Bloomingdale's or the Sherman Oaks Galleria for chic street theater.

Ironically, Sears—one of the inventors, with Montgomery Ward, of mail order marketing—was also hurt by the explosion of catalogue marketing firms that nibbled away at bits of its markets while keeping their overhead low and catering to the families too busy to shop.

**Wealth and tower:** Sears too slowly recognized the threats of these changes, in part because it was still big and profitable and in part because it had an extremely ingrown corporate culture. Ward's and Penney's, Sears' traditional rivals, were forced to make changes earlier.

After years of sluggish but profitable performance, Sears last year had to act quickly when rumors and speculative purchases of its stock pointed toward a possible takeover bid. With the takeover of Kraft, a raid on Sears no longer seemed absurd. The retail industry had been wracked by waves of takeovers in recent years, some of them driven by speculators' calculations that the break-up asset value of some retailers was greater than their stock market value.

So Sears headed off takeover talk by announcing that it was selling the tower, which it hopes will bring in more than \$1 billion. Northwestern University real estate professor Edwin Mills calculates it's an optimal time for Sears to sell since it has already milked all of the federal tax depreciation credits available. But by vacating nearly half the building, it ironically makes the property less valuable.

With the cash Sears hopes to buy back its own stock, so that the company and its employees will own about one-fourth of the shares, thus creating a strong takeover barrier. At the same time, Sears announced it would sell off the corporate-oriented part of its real estate and insurance businesses, de-

veloping a concentration on retail merchandise and financial services (such as its Dean Witter brokerage firm, Allstate Insurance and Discover Card).

Internally Sears will organize its stores around several "power centers," attempting to duplicate the "superstores" by offering a wide variety of name-brand and house-brand products at "everyday low prices" (a more efficient method of managing inventory than relying on repeated sales). Many middle managers will lose their traditional autonomy as centralized control increases over purchasing and pricing, what economist Barry Bluestone has called the "industrialization" of retailing.

**Alms for the rich:** Sears could have continued to have a cheap office whether it owned or leased space in Sears Tower, but by building a new headquarters for its merchandise group, it can gain new depreciation credits. By playing off Chicago and Illinois against sites in Texas, North Carolina and elsewhere, Sears was able to squeeze an enormous subsidy from the state for moving jobs out of Chicago to the suburbs, precisely the opposite direction that social needs dictate. With no public transportation to the area of Sears' new home, and with the suburbs all but lily-white, the new site will make it hard for black workers to keep their jobs. But it will be handy for many white executives.

Although the city offered land near O'Hare airport at a subsidy of \$104 million, Illinois Republican Gov. James Thompson's representatives early on began suggesting suburban alternatives. Thompson essentially offered Sears a blank check. Sears filled in the amount: at least \$62 million in site preparation, highways and tax breaks, plus an additional \$178 million in property tax breaks gained through establishment of a "tax increment financing" (TIF) district (for 20 years Sears' local property taxes will primarily pay off bonds issued to acquire the land). The boondoggle subsidizes not only the 200 acres Sears says it needs for its new offices, but also 586 acres for Sears' real estate subsidiary to develop.

The price is incredibly high: it is a state record for subsidies per job, and perhaps a national record as well. Furthermore, no new jobs will be created in the area. Indeed, Sears has announced it will be cutting employment. But former Chicago economic development aide Robert Mier said the worst of the deal is not just the cost. There were no quid pro quos exacted (such as guaranteeing low-income housing nearby for minority employees), and the state will make the Sears site in an affluent suburb both a TIF district and an enterprise zone—two development tools that were created explicitly for aiding economically depressed areas.

Once a paragon of inventive capitalism, Sears has joined the corporate line at the public trough. Increasingly public opinion is turning against such subsidies, argues Northwestern management professor Donald Haider, co-author of the forthcoming *Place Wars*. "The Sears deal isn't the straw that breaks the camel's back," he said, "but it's one more national celebration of communities giving away their tax bases and not thinking through their benefits and strategies." Once a source of wealth to Chicago, Sears has become a parasite. That may simply be further appropriate symbolism of the condition of American big business. □

**The changes at Sears—including the sale of the Sears Tower—have big real-life consequences for the employees and for Chicago. But they are also symbolic of major trends in the economy.**



By Doug Turetsky

NEW YORK

**D**ESPITE A MASSIVE VOTER REGISTRATION effort by progressive and non-partisan organizations during the last presidential election, the number of currently registered voters in most cities and states remains virtually the same. The reason: following the election, municipalities purge thousands of voters from the election rolls for failing to vote.

Nationwide, 44 states have purge rules that wipe voters off the rolls for non-voting. These states demand that voters reregister after failing to vote over periods ranging from two to 10 years. But a lawsuit filed by Human SERVE, a voters' rights group, and the Community Service Society (CSS), a New York City advocacy organization, in federal district court in Brooklyn seeks to overturn purge rules.

The lawsuit has already prevented a purge of New York City's voter rolls before the 1989 school board and mayoral elections. Voter registration groups in the city had added some 300,000 people to the rolls during the last presidential election. The scheduled purge would have erased the names of 312,000 voters—or about 12 percent of the city's registered voters.

Still, purges go on throughout the nation. Approximately 10 percent of Kentucky voters were disenfranchised following the recent presidential election. Some 60,000 voters were recently struck from Chicago's voter rolls. After the 1984 presidential election Chicago's election board disenfranchised 100,000 residents—a number equal to those added to the rolls during a large-scale registration drive during the election.

**Voting the dread:** Voter rolls are regularly purged to prevent election fraud—for example, people voting outside their district or using names of the dead. But Human SERVE's legal director, Deborah Karparkin, argues that the "dumping" of voter records at a time when

# The exclusive democracy club: how voter-roll purges pick on minorities

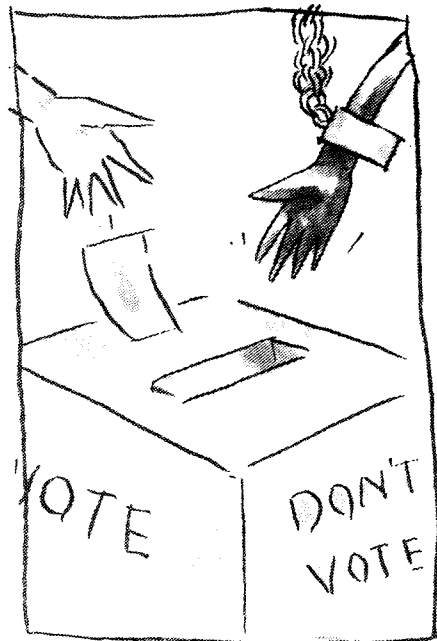
so much information is kept on computer files about individuals—and often freely traded among government agencies and corporations—is a backward method of trying to ensure clean elections. And there's little hard data about how much fraud really exists and what, if any, connection it has to registration rules. Although Illinois has some of the toughest voter registration rules in the country, Chicago retains its reputation for fraudulent elections.

## ELECTIONS

Purge methods and requirements differ from state to state, yet they appear to be uniformly clumsy and impact most heavily upon minority voters. Just before Chicago's recent mayoral election, it was discovered that black independent candidate Timothy Evans and his wife had been erroneously purged from the city's rolls.

Even if a voter is not disenfranchised erroneously, anti-purge advocates argue that the practice is wrong. Most voter registration drives concentrate on poor white and minority residents, who have traditionally seen elections as having little effect upon their lives. Louise Altman, New York director of Human SERVE, contends that purging underscores "the fragility of the relationship between voters and the system." Once purged, it becomes less likely that voters with only minor experience at the polls will renew that relationship with the electoral process.

**Legal reasoning:** The federal lawsuit filed in Brooklyn charges that purging of voters violates the Voting Rights Act and the First Amendment of the U.S. Constitution. While



voting rights advocates—and many elected officials—have long believed that purging results proportionately in the disenfranchisement of more minority than white voters, they have not previously backed up that belief with facts. It is only with the filing of the lawsuit that a detailed statistical analysis of a local purge has been undertaken.

In a study accompanying the suit, Allan Lichtman, a history professor at American University, compared the number of voters scheduled to be purged in 24 New York City assembly districts composed of populations either 90 percent white or 90 percent minority. He found that within the predominantly white districts, 11 percent of voters were slated for disenfranchisement, but in the minority districts the number was 15 percent. In an affidavit filed in federal court

Lichtman declared that of the 1 million voters encompassed in this study, a minority voter was 35 percent more likely to be purged from registration rolls.

The House Committee on Administration has approved a bill that would establish national voter registration procedures. The bill gives states two options for updating voter records without purging. One copies a system already used in Washington, D.C., where the election board sends a non-forwardable card to anyone who did not vote in a previous election, which is followed with a second forwardable card if the voter has not responded. If there is no response to either mailing, the voter is placed on an inactive list but may vote in the next election with valid identification. The second option is for states to develop a system to update registration records when a voter files for a change of address with the post office, eliminating the need to reregister or face being purged from the rolls.

The legislation is expected to reach the House floor in the fall. But many incumbent elected officials, aware that most of those unregistered are minority or poor, are reluctant to support anti-purge legislation because marked changes among their constituencies could alter future electoral results.

Approximately 70 million Americans are currently not registered to vote. Many of them may well have been churned from the rolls at one time or another. Given the cost and impracticality of registering and reregistering the same people, Altman calls the anti-purge fights "the ultimate registration drive." □

**Doug Turetsky** is editor of *City Limits*, an alternative publication in New York City.

By Chris Norton

SAN SALVADOR, EL SALVADOR

**T**HE BUSH ADMINISTRATION AND THE NEW rightist Salvadoran government are making a coordinated effort to brand Nicaragua the violator of the Arias peace accords in preparation for the Central American presidents' August summit meeting.

Charges of Nicaraguan arms running to the Salvadoran guerrillas—the original justification for U.S. funding of the contras—have been revived, with Vice President Dan Quayle posing among hundreds of Eastern-bloc AK-47s allegedly captured in a guerrilla safehouse and shipped from Nicaragua. Both the U.S. Embassy in San Salvador and the Salvadoran military have accused the leftist guerrillas of killing a string of government officials and prominent rightist intellectuals. The Salvadoran military even claims that all the killings have been carried out by a special Nicaraguan-trained unit under the direct control of the unified guerrilla leadership.

But while the guerrillas make little secret of their new stocks of AK-47s with which they are replacing their aging stocks of U.S.-made M-16s, there has been no convincing evidence that they come from Nicaragua. The rebels say they've been buying them from the inactive contras.

And while the guerrillas have admitted several of the political assassinations—including the April 19 killing of Attorney General Roberto Garcia Alvarado—they have categorically denied killing either Minister of the Pres-

## Another State Department disinformation campaign?

idency Antonio Rodriguez Porth or rightist ideologue Edgar Chacon, two killings the embassy and the government are trying to pin on the rebels. Although U.S. Ambassador William Walker says he has proof of rebel involvement, he refuses to produce it.

Sources on the left say that several previous guerrilla assassinations were carried out

## EL SALVADOR

by an urban commando unit of the communist party, without authorization of the guerrilla unified command. The killing of the attorney general provoked a major dispute inside the rebel structure, with many of the leaders critical of the unilateral action by the guerrilla unit. Guerrilla sources say that an agreement was reached that in the future, such actions can be undertaken only with the approval from the unified command.

**Polarization or provocation?** The Salvadoran army's allegations about a Nicaraguan-trained guerrilla hit squad were even more transparently propagandistic and aimed at the presidential summit. Curiously, rightist President Alfredo Cristiani was the most honest. "It is my personal conviction the FMLN [Faribundo Marti National Liberation Front] are responsible for the assassina-

tions," Cristiani told reporters. "There is an investigation underway which we hope will prove this, but I cannot really come out and say there is hard evidence right now."

Privately, the Salvadoran military's most experienced intelligence officer admits the army is confused by who is behind the killings. And "in a country like this who knows which group may be doing the killings," adds Christian Democratic spokesman Eduardo Colindres.

Nor are the sources of the FMLN's new AK-47s any clearer. FMLN arms probably come from a variety of sources and are smuggled in through many routes. While some may come from Nicaragua, the black market and the warehouses of the Honduran army (stocked by the U.S. in connection with its arms shipments to the contras) are equally plausible sources.

The U.S. Embassy and the Salvadoran

## Once again, the U.S. is blaming Nicaragua for arming Salvadoran guerrillas.

military launched a coordinated campaign in mid-May to link the arms to Nicaragua and to counter FMLN claims to have bought them from the contras. And just before the June 1 inauguration of the new Arena government the Salvadoran army announced it had uncovered a major FMLN arms cache in a San Salvador lumberyard.

**Coincidentals:** But there is much skepticism about the army's story. First, the timing was too perfect—the cache was supposedly found at the time of highest media visibility, the inauguration, when the U.S. delegation, and Vice President Quayle a week later, could have photo opportunities in the midst of the so-called captured arms. Different versions of the captured arms story didn't help their credibility. The army variously claimed they had all been found at the lumberyard and that they had come from different sites. "The stories were completely contradictory," says one Western (not U.S.) diplomat who went to the army briefing. "I'm sure the guerrillas have a lot of arms in the capital, but I doubt they'd keep 300 assault rifles in one location." Commented another diplomat, "We saw AK-47s, but we have no idea where they came from or how they got here."

Once again the U.S. Embassy is asking reporters to accept charges about Nicaraguan arms shipments on faith. But after the systematic disinformation campaigns of the Reagan administration, the State Department's credibility rating isn't terribly high. □

**Chris Norton** is *In These Times'* correspondent in El Salvador.



# OUR LAST CHANCE TO SAVE AMERICA'S RAINFORESTS

**A**N ARSONIST CAN DESTROY A FOREST with a single match. But a worse form of vandalism leaves a forest devastated beyond recovery.

It's called clearcutting.

This year alone, accelerated clearcutting will flatten a quarter of a million acres of virgin wilderness in our National Forests — including rare stands of original American rainforest.



Many of the trees being cut are awe-inspiring survivors—twenty-five feet around...hundreds of feet tall...a thousand years old. Once they fall, the world will never see their like again.

Can't our government halt the wholesale destruction of these national treasures?

The shocking truth is, *your tax dollars pay for this butchery.* The U.S. Forest Service itself, a rigid

bureaucracy that employs more road builders than biologists, has marked 62,000 acres of giant trees for clearcutting this year in the Pacific Northwest.

## Total Destruction...At Taxpayer Expense

Our National Forests are being developed, cut-over, domesticated. In the last five decades, twice as many acres have been lost to logging and road-building than have been set aside and protected as pristine wilderness.

Our giant trees — Douglas Fir, Sitka Spruce, Hemlock, Western Red Cedar — are unique in all the world, as ecologically precious as the tropical hardwoods in the equatorial rainforests. Yet if nothing is done, the towering groves in our National Forests will be gone in fifteen years.

These self-sustaining ancient forests and their richly complex array of life will disappear. In their place will be wood plantations, commercial forests with no genetic diversity, managed with chainsaws, bulldozers, and toxic herbicides. The steepest, most spectacular areas of wilderness will be turned into eroded wasteland. And all at taxpayer expense.

Incredibly, just when the U.S. is trying to convince other nations to stop deforestation in order to forestall the Greenhouse Effect, we're paying clearcutters to haul our own most magnificent trees to the lumber and pulp mills.

Rare spotted owls are just one of the species at risk from clear-cutting in the U.S.

Every year, it's costing us \$165 million in cash to devastate our own forestlands. And that doesn't count the millions of dollars in damage being done to tourism and to commercial and sport fishing.

In fact, unsupervised taxpayer subsidies make it possible for clearcutters to buy a 500-year-old tree for \$5.

Adding insult to injury, most of this clearcut wood is purely for export. Giant trees from imperiled Northwest rainforests are ground into pulp and loaded on ships for Japan.

This isn't "forest management" in the tradition of those who founded the U.S. Forest Service on principles of stewardship. It amounts to scandalous mismanagement of an absolutely irreplaceable national resource.

Clearcutting a forest is equivalent to strip-mining.

The aesthetic violence only hints at the profound, long-term destructiveness.

America's ancient forests, felled at a loss for export, stripped of their natural inhabitants and left to erode, will never be the same again.

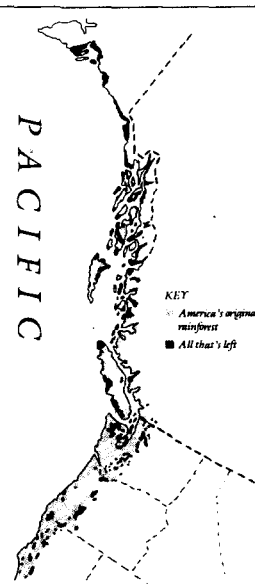
## The American Chainsaw Massacre

As you read this, the U.S. Forest Service has doomed more virgin woodland than at any time in the last half century. With just three percent of our nation's original, ancient forest remaining, clearcutters claim three square miles of public forest every week. This policy must be changed.

Bad planning, cozy deals, no Congressional oversight...we're actually paying for the privilege of destroying our own rainforests with our own wasted tax dollars. And the ultimate cost of deforestation will be catastrophic.

It's time to reform the U.S. Forest Service. Demand action from your elected representatives.

Please mail the coupon below immediately. Thank you.



The U.S. Forest Service has slated 62,000 acres of ancient Pacific Northwest forest for clearcutting in 1989, threatening temperate rainforests unique in all the world. Giant trees from Alaska's Tongass region (top) are clearcut, pulped and shipped to Japan... courtesy of the U.S. taxpayer.

The wilderness now being clearcut is the last of the original forest that once cloaked our continent from ocean to ocean. These trees were already giants when Lewis and Clark headed west in 1804.



Lighthawk pilots are flying missions to map rainforest destruction from Costa Rica to Alaska. You can support their vital work with your tax-deductible donation to Lighthawk, "The Wings of Conservation."

## Only YOU can prevent clearcutting.

Dear Representative \_\_\_\_\_:

The U.S. Forest Service is using my tax dollars to destroy America's original forests. How can we possibly convince the rest of the world to halt deforestation when we clearcut our own unique rainforests here at home? It's time for genuine oversight and real reform. Tell me what you're going to do to safeguard the giant trees in the last of America's ancient forests.

(Signed) \_\_\_\_\_

Address \_\_\_\_\_

Forward the protest above to my Congressperson. [ ] I also enclose a tax-deductible contribution to support your missions on behalf of conservation: \$35 \$50 \$100 \$500 More.



**Lighthawk**  
The Wings of Conservation

Box 8163, Santa Fe, New Mexico 87504 (505) 982-9656



By Eric Onstad

TIGRAY PROVINCE, ETHIOPIA

**B**OOMS OF ANTI-AIRCRAFT GUNS ROCK PRISTINE gorges and cliffs in this rugged northern province of Ethiopia. Under a giant camouflaged tent tucked in a canyon, nearly 2,000 people stand silently as echoes of a gun salute fade into the moonlit night. Rebels at a congress of the Tigray People's Liberation Front (TPLF) pay tribute to dead guerrillas from a war which the West virtually ignores.

Civil war has claimed about 200,000 lives and left thousands crippled since rebels in Eritrea, to the north of Tigray Province, began fighting 28 years ago. The fiercest battles—and most of the casualties—have come since Tigrayans took up arms in 1975. The war has spanned a flip-flop in superpower patronage of Ethiopia, from U.S. support of Emperor Haile Selassie to Soviet backing of the government soon after his ouster in 1974. But even in this era of superpower peace settlements in Afghanistan and Namibia, this conflict seems intractable. It drags on as the 20th century's longest war.

**Winning is losing:** This year, however, as the conflict approached its third decade, the routine horrors of military offensives, counter-offensives and famine were given a jolt. A stunning series of rebel military victories in February and an attempted coup in May sharply altered the face of the struggle. The underlying matrix of the conflict remained largely untouched, but the immediate context of the struggle has moved from the battlefield to the political arena. In a strange twist, military success and its aftermath have left rebels in a disoriented quandary, while quick suppression of a military uprising has given Ethiopian President Mengistu Haile Mariam a tighter grip on power, at least in the short term.

Over the past 15 months, the TPLF and the Eritrean People's Liberation Front (EPLF)—another rebel force, which is fighting for the independence of the Eritrea province along the Red Sea—scored a series of major triumphs over a demoralized Ethiopian army. In this February the government suffered its biggest humiliation ever when the TPLF—which supports independence for Eritrea, but whose own motivation for fighting is to oust the central government—crushed 25,000 army troops in 10 days of intense battle. The government abandoned the provincial capital Mekele without a fight and by March the TPLF had occupied virtually all of Tigray, about the size of Kentucky. The EPLF, which controls all of western and northern Eritrea, overlooks the third-largest city, Keren, from mountaintop strongholds only 15 miles away.

But battlefields remained quiet into July, even in the wake of a failed coup attempt which left Mengistu in firm control of a weakened army. The uprising, led by the chief of staff and the air force commander, had widespread support among restive military leaders who were anxious to end the war. Mengistu put down the coup attempt quickly and efficiently because he received advance warning and readied his 2,000-strong place guard unit, analysts say. Some 29 officers, including 11 generals, were killed during the uprising or executed afterward. With nearly 200 others detained, Mengistu rid himself of plotters but also stripped the military of experienced officers.

Both rebel groups have failed to exploit the weakened government position. They have



TPLF soldiers survey wreckage from a battle in which the rebels killed, wounded or captured about 25,000 government troops.

## After 28 years of war, Ethiopians discuss peace

adopted cautious military strategies since 1976, when the EPLF rushed in and captured large chunks of territory but subsequently suffered major losses and retreated. They remain wary of moving too fast. In taking Mekele this year, the TPLF got the plum of occupying a provincial capital but also got saddled with administering a war-ravaged city of 70,000 hungry residents and unemployed civil servants. The EPLF remained aware that military campaigns might rally ordinary Ethiopians—who dislike Mengistu, but oppose secession—to support the government.

**Confusing game:** In the meantime, all three players, engaged in the banter of peace proposals, sent out conflicting signals while outsiders played the mediation game. Mengistu, who for years wouldn't acknowledge the existence of a civil war or rebel groups, made a call for unconditional peace talks shortly after crushing the coup attempt but later ruled out Eritrean independence. Both main rebel groups initially rejected talks but later accepted Mengistu's offer.

EPLF leader Isaias Afwerki, in a surprising about face at a London press conference in late June, played down the importance of Eritrean independence, the unifying cry for rebels since 1961. The TPLF threatened to step up fighting if the government didn't respond to its peace proposals. Mengistu, under pressure from the Soviets to begin talks, was in East Germany reportedly signing an agreement for military supplies when he hurried back to crush the uprising. It remains unclear whether the rebels and Mengistu are serious about talks or merely seeking the high ground of world opinion while they prepare for military campaigns.

**History's web:** Despite its successes on the battlefield in recent months, the TPLF

may find it as difficult as the government to forge unity in a country of spectacular natural barriers and disparate ethnic groups. Since the seventh century Ethiopia has been alternately torn apart by war and fused together by imperial kings and feudal warlords.

### AFRICA

To strengthen their tenuous hold on provinces, early kings were vagabonds, moving their royal tented courts from region to region, over sweeping highland plateaus and through yawning valleys and precipitous gorges.

The earliest emperors were from Tigray—where about 2,500 years ago, descendants of Arabian immigrants founded the Axumite kingdom—but political power steadily shifted south to the Amhara people. Rebels say Ethiopian rulers from Menelik II, who created the modern Ethiopian state in the 1890s, to Mengistu have suppressed other peoples, their cultures and languages.

The TPLF got military training from the Eritreans, but the teachers have drifted away in ideology, military strategy and lifestyle from their pupils. The EPLF has abandoned guerrilla hit-and-run tactics and moderated its Marxism. The EPLF now fights a conventional war behind trenches and fortifications. The Eritrean conflict stems from the 1890s, when Italy colonized the region, creating a separate political entity.

The TPLF took control of most of the countryside in the early 1980s by winning over a peasantry which makes up 95 percent of the population. The peasants have reason to be pleased: the TPLF has abolished an ancient feudal system in which peasants handed up to 80 percent of their crops to landlords. The

government also implemented land reform programs in certain areas, but it obliges peasants to sell much of their produce through a state-controlled marketing system at fixed and often artificially low prices. The TPLF allows farmers to sell their surplus on the free market.

Besides offering access to land, and social and economic services, rebels tapped widespread discontent with Mengistu's government. Ethiopia, one of the most impoverished nations on earth according to World Bank statistics, spends over one-half of its budget to fight the war. Economic growth—measured in gross domestic product—declined by 2.1 percent in 1987, and agricultural production has dropped by an average of 0.4 percent each year since 1980.

At the same time, the government's human rights record has stagnated as one of the worst in Africa.

**No perestroika:** Many Ethiopians associate repression and a shattered, inefficient economy with the government's Marxist ideology. Ironically, this presents a further obstacle to Tigrayan rebels: in 1985, Marxists founded the sole political party within the TPLF, the Marxist-Leninist League of Tigray (MLLT), which held a congress prior to the TPLF in the same remote canyon site.

Outside the meeting tent, Josef Stalin stares from a MLLT placard along with Marx, Engels and Lenin. Alone with Albania, the league defends Stalin and regards post-1953 Soviet ideology as "anti-Marxist revisionism." Although Stalinism contradicts much of TPLF's grass-roots work, including its opposition to agricultural collectivization by the government, most TPLF leaders are members of MLLT. "The only time the condition of the [Soviet] working class improved was during Stalin," says Haile-Kiros Gesesse, TPLF representative for Sudan. "His weaknesses should not undermine his achievements."

Eric Onstad is a Nairobi-based writer.





Polish president Wojciech Jaruzelski and Solidarity leader Lech Walesa: both try to look the other way after the recent elections.

## Poles try to steer the roller coaster

By Franek Michalski

**L**IKE A ROLLER COASTER, THE NEW POLISH electoral process started off with a minimum of momentum and then quickly picked up speed until it was giddily careening down the untested track of political pluralism.

Solidarity's complete victory and the Communist Party's utter humiliation in June's parliamentary elections led first to a constitutional crisis in which no credible candidate would accept nomination for president and now to Western European-style wrangling over the composition of the government.

The first crisis was resolved by an agreement between Solidarity and the party to let the diffident Gen. Wojciech Jaruzelski hang onto the presidency, with its sweeping veto power over the legislature. But Solidarity, dominating the legislature politically if not numerically, is shying away from accepting ministerial posts in a Communist-led government in which it would share the onus for Poland's grim economic problems. Rather, Solidarity leader Lech Walesa says he is looking forward to the day when Solidarity will form its own government. As *In These Times* went to press, Gen. Jaruzelski warned that Poland's Communist neighbors—particularly the USSR, East Germany and Czechoslovakia—would look "askance" at a Solidarity regime.

It's a good time to recap the results and ask about the immediate future. Has the roller coaster arrived back on the terra firma, or is it merely poised on a high for a moment before plummeting again into the realm of the political unknown?

**Election recap:** During the round-table negotiations leading up to elections, the Solidarity side agreed to electoral participation as a concession to the government in return for legalizing Solidarity. The "deal" was made necessary, both sides agreed, by the severity of the economic crisis. If society at large, and the working class in particular, were to tighten their belts, a consensus would have to be hammered out at the national level.

But the deal came at a very high cost. Many objected to the undemocratic balloting

formula by which the ruling communists, officially known as the Polish United Workers' Party (PZPR), were guaranteed a 65 percent majority in the Sejm (lower house). Secondly, workers were reluctant to accept Solidarity leader Lech Walesa's appeal for a strike moratorium until after the elections. It began to look as if the Solidarity leadership was becoming a "transmission belt," relaying tough orders from the government to an unruly working class.

Moreover, the undemocratic nature of representation within Solidarity led to internal dissension. The Citizens Committee of the Chairman of Solidarity, which selected the movement's electoral slate, consisted in the main of Warsaw intellectuals and veteran opposition activists. There are still very few

### POLAND

workers from the 1980 upheaval (Zbigniew Bujak from Warsaw and Wladyslaw Frasyniuk from Wroclaw being the chief exceptions) and fewer still from the 1988 strike leadership.

A generation gap became painfully evident. The Citizens' Committee, almost all of whom are over 40, seems increasingly out of touch with young workers and students. Worse, this division fits the government's often-repeated distinction between constructive opposition, willing to collaborate for the national good, and extremist elements bent on confrontation.

**The boycott coalition:** The "unconstructive" opposition is an unlikely coalition united only by their rejection of the Citizens' Committee's gradualist program. The Working Group of Solidarity want to counteract Walesa's "dictatorial methods" by convening a Solidarity national congress to discuss grievances and elect new leaders. Fighting Solidarity, a group strong in the industrial city of Wroclaw, has been pressing for radical, anti-Soviet tactics since martial law days. The ultranationalist Confederation for an Independent Poland (KPN) has challenged Solidarity's "workerist" tint since 1980. Its banners have appeared often at

boycott rallies, although individual KPN candidates did run for office. The Independent Students' Association, which has not yet been granted the legal status promised it at the round table in March, has mobilized campus protests and raucous demonstrations.

Leftist groups have also appeared. The Polish Socialist Party (PPS), disbanded after World War II, has re-emerged. Most of its followers support the Citizens' Committee. However, a youth-led split-off, PPS-RD (PPS-Democratic Revolution), rejects "sham" electoral politics and calls for direct action in favor of worker self-management. A Polish Green party has formed, along with dozens of ecology clubs and ad hoc groups protesting nuclear power plants, polluting industries, and, lately, the suspected dumping of foreign toxic wastes on Polish soil agreed to by the government for hard currency payments.

Not least, there are the youth culture anarchist groupings. Freedom and Peace (WiP), the oldest of the post-martial law youth movements, has spawned several offshoots, each with its own style. These include an intellectual journal called *Future Times* in Warsaw, the alternative culture/pacifist/punk rock magazine *A Capella* in Gdansk and Catholic-oriented groupings in Gorzow and Krakow. The yippie-like Orange Alternative sponsors street happenings, including an electoral campaign for their leader, "Major" Fydrych (see accompanying story). He appeared at rallies in boxer shorts carrying signs reading, "I am sensitive to your problems" and "Beat your tanks into Volgas [the Soviet car]."

**Walesa's response:** In dozens of personal appearances in factories, universities, churches and press interviews, Lech Walesa has defended the policies of the Citizens' Committee against its critics. It would of course be better, he argues, to start with a fully democratic Solidarity. But martial law savaged the organization—many elected officials left the country or became inactive, while many new people joined the ranks to do good work without the benefit of being elected at the National Congress in 1981.

We are faced with a historic task, Walesa insists: the transition from 40 years of single-party rule to a pluralist form of democracy. This can only be accomplished through unity in the ranks and respect for the repressive power still in the hands of the government and its international allies. Yes, Solidarity's candidates had been chosen in a top-down fashion. But how else could it have been done? Solidarity's job is to put good people in the assembly and to encourage local action. In many cities and towns local leadership has not yet had time to develop. Should Solidarity's critics have been included on the electoral slate? How? Many of them have nothing more of a program than personal bitterness and a few catchy slogans.

"I expect people to trust me," Walesa said in a recent interview for Solidarity's weekly newspaper. "Haven't I earned such trust in the last 20 years? This does not mean dictatorship, but it does mean following a specific plan of action, which demands discipline."

"Today we need to practice self-limiting democracy," he said, "to assure full democracy in the future. Therefore, we entered the elections as a bloc with candidates approved by Solidarity."

The National Assembly elections on June 4 and 18 were not a competition among individual candidates running on the merits of their political views. Instead they amounted to a three-way plebiscite, a choice between the Solidarity Citizens' Committee, the Communists of the PZPR, or a boycott of both. (There were exceptions. Some Solidarity voters supported selected PZPR candidates, such as Tadeusz Fiszbach, the Gdansk party chief who helped Solidarity in 1980. And in a few districts the Citizens' Committee nominee was challenged by someone from the Working Group, KPN, or a church association.)

The results showed overwhelming support for Walesa's leadership: Solidarity Citizens' Committee candidates won 99 out of 100 seats in the senate and all 161 seats allotted to non-government candidates in the Sejm.

By contrast, the PZPR's candidates were routed. Only two out of 35 names on the "national list," composed of top politburo members and regional party chiefs running unopposed, received the required 50 percent of valid votes to be confirmed to the Sejm. Inexplicably, the voting procedures customary in Soviet-style elections (crossing off names from a list of approved candidates) were not revised. This made "negative voting" possible: by crossing off every name a voter chose "none of the above."

This negative preference canceled out the built-in 65 percent majority for the party, making Jaruzelski's election to the presidency virtually impossible. Solidarity helped reinstate the party's majority by agreeing to the running of another "national list," which was confirmed in poorly attended balloting. The irony of negative voting was still apparent on the opening day of the assembly, when the prime minister and his Cabinet had to sit in the visitors' gallery because all of them had been beaten by "none of the above."

**Strange bedfellows:** The "unconstructive" opposition, along with many ordinary voters, were outraged at Solidarity for helping Jaruzelski get elected. "Jaruzelski must go" and "Soviets out!" appeared on banners in a wave of demonstrations in late June in Opole, Wroclaw, Krakow, Katowice, Gdansk and Poznan. At the demonstration in Krakow the Soviet consulate was pelted with small



change, "in case they need the train fare!"

Solidarity's spokesman, Janusz Onyszkiewicz, warned that pushing for the presidency while the party controlled the army, security forces, courts and economic apparatus raised the specter of Allende's Chile.

Solidarity's lopsided parliamentary victory does not indicate unqualified unanimity in the population at large. The Solidarity daily paper *Gazeta Wyborcza* (Election Gazette) published a district-by-district analysis of the results as if senate seats had

been assigned proportionally as in Italy or Israel rather than winner-take-all systems of the U.S. According to *Gazeta's* estimates, the Citizens' Committee would have received 71 seats (for 64 percent of valid votes), the government-PZPR coalition 19 (approximately 17 percent) and independent candidates not from the Citizens' Committee some 10 seats (9 percent). The remaining 10 percent of valid votes were "negative."

This way of assessing the results, added to the fact that 38 percent of the electorate

did not go to the polls, reveals divisions in society concealed by the yes/no or boycott formula of the electoral process.

The PZPR appears rent by internal divisions of its own. One high party official, Leszek Miller, has proposed that the PZPR disband to form two new parties separating the hard-line reactionaries from the reformers. While this extreme proposal has been officially rejected, the party clearly wants to shed its Leninist image in favor of a social-democratic one.

The Solidarity leadership's involvement in parliamentary maneuvering (not to mention the wooing of foreign dignitaries from rich Western countries) has turned attention away from the grass-roots organizing of a social movement. Or rather, it has sharpened the division between Solidarity's leadership and its constituents, who have increasingly turned to strikes and street protests to express their grievances.

**Franek Michalski** writes frequently on Polish affairs for *In These Times*.

## By Lawrence O'Connor

WROCLAW, POLAND

**W**ALDEMAR "MAJOR" FYDRYCH STANDS on a makeshift stage in downtown Wroclaw on an overcast June afternoon just days before the country's first contested parliamentary elections in more than four decades. He's dressed in tennis shoes, army camouflage fatigues and a bright orange undershirt. Before him is a motley crowd of perhaps 500 people that has gathered on Ulica Swidnicka, Wroclaw's central shopping area and the city's traditional site for street theater, demonstrations and illicit political rallies. Behind him fly banners announcing his candidacy for both the senate and the presidency. It is one of the more bizarre political campaigns in Poland.

Weaving their merry way through the mass of chuckling university students, bewildered middle-aged couples and inebriated street people are a handful of Fydrych's comrades in arms, strange-looking individuals wearing orange and polka-dotted elf caps. One of them holds a placard bearing a photo of Fydrych and his campaign slogan: "An Orange Major or a Red General? Take it easy and think."

With his odd military attire and thick, dark brown beard, Fydrych strikes an observer as a mildly psychedelic caricature of Fidel Castro.

For the past few hours he has held forth on a variety of topics: the roots of Poland's economic crisis, the pollution of its culture and art by forces within and without its borders, the absurdity of its politicians, the "surrealistic" nature of its day-to-day life. He plays cat and mouse with the crowd, toying mischievously with their emotions.

His promise to solve the housing shortage by sending Russian soldiers packing and turning their barracks into apartments for Poles draws wild cheers. And his denunciation of president and party leader Gen. Jaruzelski—the Red General—as a pitiful "creature" without the decency to "commit hari-kari" draws appreciative laughter. And so does his toast to another well-known party leader, delivered as a rhyming Polish couplet: "Long live Stalin, whose lips are sweeter than raspberries." But angry boos meet his denigration of Solidarity leader Lech Walesa's role as savior of the Polish people.

**Out of orbit:** Fydrych takes it all in—the boos, the laughter, the cheers—with the easy equanimity and faintly mocking smile of a court jester.

Waldemar Maria Fydrych was born on April 8, 1953, or, as he will gleefully point out, three days after the death of Joseph Stalin. Like the famed Polish astronomer Nicolaus Copernicus, Fydrych came into the world in the medieval town of Torun. And, like Copernicus, the 36-year-old Fydrych has introduced a rather unique way of looking at his universe. In Fydrych's case it's a concept he calls socialist surrealism.

# Poland's 'Oranges' tend to the sour and the pithy

Although by some accounts a fairly sophisticated art historian, Fydrych is best known as the commandant of a ragtag army of Polish non-conformists called "The Orange Alternative," whose members dress in the long, pointed caps of *Krasnala* (the fairyland dwarfs of Polish literature) and stage satirical "happenings" on the streets of Wroclaw and other Polish cities.

While nominally apolitical, the happenings—multimedia events employing elements of street theater, mime, music, avant-garde sculpture and graffiti—are parodies of socialist icons and revolutionary rhetoric or of the dismal economic realities of Poland.

In the process of tweaking the nose of the party establishment, Fydrych has garnered numerous awards from, among others, Solidarity, Polish film director Andrzej Wajda and the overseas Polish language press.

More importantly, he has become a hero of sorts for the younger generation. As one young Solidarity campaign worker in Warsaw puts it: "It used to be that young people could only hate and be afraid. After the happenings, it's a different environment. Now I can show that I'm stronger than the police because I can laugh at them."

The self-proclaimed major organized the Oranges on the campus of the University of Wroclaw in August 1980, just prior to the temporary legalization of Solidarity. Over the next 16 months he staged a number of small happenings.

With the imposition of martial law in December 1981, the Orange Alternative was forced underground. It turned to painting cartoon dwarfs on the walls and fences of Wroclaw, often in places where Polish security forces had just painted over Solidarity slogans.

The group resurfaced in October 1986 with the "Day of Revolution," a mock celebration of the anniversary of the Russian Revolution of 1917. One of the first opposition groups to openly defy government bans on demonstrations, the Oranges were joined on Swidnicka Street by several thousand students. As members of the "Red Army," participants came dressed in red costumes, waving banners and shouting revolutionary slogans.

By Western standards the happening would seem harmless enough, but local security forces in Wroclaw were not amused. As riot police began sweeping down Swidnicka Street, they were intercepted by what looked like two large floats made of bed sheets. In fact, they were the *Aurora* and the *Potemkin*, the famed rebel ships of the czar's fleet that had joined the revolution.

Without their knowledge, the police had been written into the script, cast as the loyalist White Army. The authorities eventu-

ally dispersed the happening, reportedly beating and arresting hundreds of participants.

**Paper chase:** Dozens of other happenings followed in Wroclaw, Warsaw and other cities. The levels of police brutality varied, but not the level of absurdity.

On Jan. 10, 1987, the Oranges staged their immortal "Toilet Paper Happening." In honor of the critical shortage of that very basic household commodity, the major handed free sheets of paper to everyone attending. The police, who were called in once more to put down the insurrection, began searching everyone's bags. Those found with toilet paper were arrested.

Those old enough to remember the hippie movement might be tempted to write off happenings as a relic of the '60s, like love beads and LSD. But within the context of daily life in Poland of the '80s—where people stand hours in line for basic food items and where there are 30-year waiting lists for apartments, where workers earning an average of \$20 a month joke that "the government pretends to pay us and we pretend to work," where psychologists link falling life expectancy rates to a generalized "psychopolitical" depression—the mad activities of the Orange Alternative seem somehow more relevant.

But for the Oranges, who think of the movement more in cultural terms than political ones, happenings are also a very definite art form embodying the Fydrych concept of "socialist surrealism."

The term is a play on Stalin's "social realism," the artistic and literary style he ordained to glorify the proletariat. Given the disparity between the noble rhetoric of Marxist-Leninism and the actual, nightmarish political and economic situation in Poland, the idea of any sort of social "realism" is to Fydrych and his followers an utter fantasy.

Rather than react to absurdities of Polish life in a traditional fashion like more conventional opposition groups, however, the Oranges accept the rules and imagery of the Marxist-Leninist game at face value. But they reserve the right to follow them through to what they see as their inevitably ridiculous conclusions.

The purpose of a happening, Fydrych says, is basically to "free up the psyche," while humor "helps to eliminate much of the psychological garbage that is a basic result of the system."

In March 1988 Fydrych was arrested while handing out free tampons at a happening. At his approximately 20 previous arrests Fydrych had usually been taken to the police station, interrogated, fined and released. This time he was given a three-month jail

sentence.

Some 6,000 or more people turned out for the Orange's annual celebration of spring several weeks later to protest the Major's sentencing. When a mannequin of Gen. Jaruzelski was brought out, riot police are said to have brutally broken up the demonstration with tear gas and clubs.

According to Miroslaw Peczak, a University of Warsaw cultural sociologist specializing in counterculture activities, it was the authorities' most violent reaction to date. It was also, Peczak says, a turning point for the movement.

**Cop out:** Shortly after the demonstration, Fydrych's sentence was overturned by another court. The police changed their tactics. While still attending happenings, they became, for the most part, passive observers. Peczak says the change was disastrous for Orange Alternative's happenings. "The police must react. Without a police reaction it was all for nothing."

The June elections in Poland seemed to offer a way out of the Orange Alternative's crisis. According to the rules, a candidate needed only 3,000 signatures to get his name on the ballot for either house of the parliament.

Less than an hour before the deadline in May, the Major still lacked several hundred signatures. With his penchant for humor, it seems that a lot of people had trouble believing he was serious about running for the senate. Several dozen supporters scurried around Wroclaw in the final minutes, eventually collecting almost 500 more signatures than needed.

As expected, the Major's campaign was out of the ordinary. He announced early on that if elected to the senate he would attend the inauguration wearing a Roman toga and laurel wreath and be borne on a litter carried by members of the Orange Alternative.

Fydrych also made it clear to voters from the beginning that he didn't actually want to be a senator but would be using his senate seat as a stepping stone to the presidency. He also suggested that Jaruzelski would need somewhere to go when the Major replaced him as head of state.

As such, he did his best to mold his campaign into a personal duel with Gen. Jaruzelski, "the captain of the sinking ship," in Fydrych's words. He sent a letter to the general advising him that he should start clearing out his desk.

Fydrych conceded that it was difficult translating the surrealism of the Orange Alternative movement into a political platform. Many voters insisted on looking at his campaign through the lens of realism.

When the election was over, Waldemar "Major" Fydrych received 1.5 percent of the votes. Undaunted, Fydrych remains convinced of his eventual election to the presidency. And that, he claims, will be "the greatest happening in the world."

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IN THESE TIMES AUGUST 2-29, 1989 11



By Rod Benson

**C**HEMICALLY TAINTED APPLES, CHICKENS poisoned with salmonella, ground-water polluted with pesticides and fertilizers—it's enough to start a national fast.

But consumers can take heart. A growing minority of family farmers are discovering that more chemicals don't lead to more prosperity. Quite the opposite: chemically-intensive, all-out production agriculture has been the driving force behind thousands of farm foreclosures during the '80s.

Now, with hearings on the 1990 farm bill underway, environmental concerns top the agenda for change. At stake is the future course of American agriculture. The only question is, how effectively can farm and urban interests unite for reform?

"It takes a crisis for consumer, environmental and farm groups to realize they have some common ground," says Cheryl Cook, environmental liaison with the National Farmers Union. "And that's definitely what we've reached."

Without a doubt, the potential benefits for all sides are tremendous.

A group called Practical Farmers of Iowa is proving that using fewer chemicals doesn't necessarily lead to lower yields. Last year, on 17 trial fields across Iowa, Practical Farmers found that cutting nitrogen applications nearly in half resulted in no significant loss in yields. Fertilizer cost savings added up to \$8.50 an acre.

According to the National Toxics Campaign's 1988 report "Shadow on the Land," farmers pay an annual bill of more than \$5 billion for pesticides and an additional \$7 billion for fertilizers. Their study estimates that about a third of the nation's counties are vulnerable to pesticide or nitrate pollution in their groundwater.

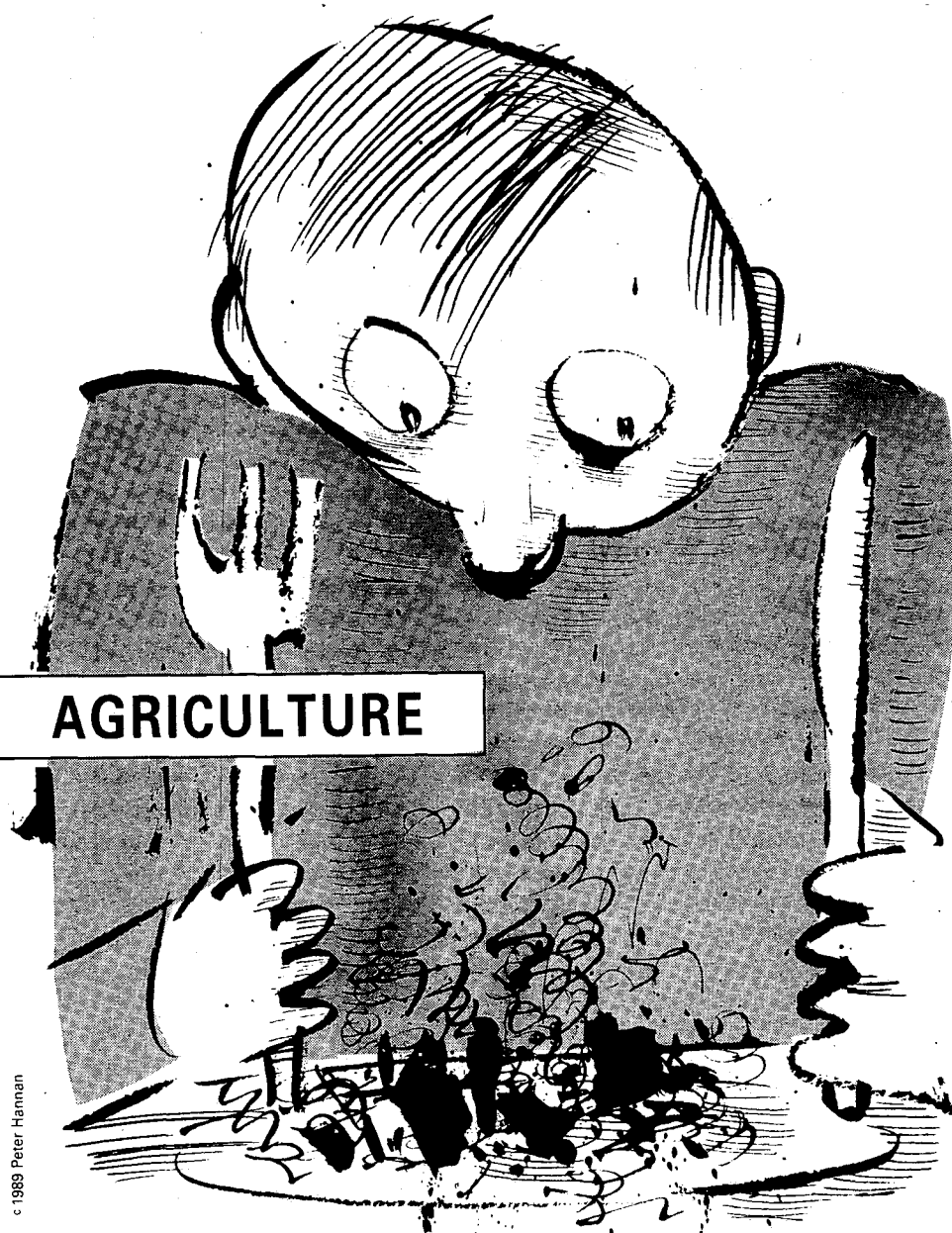
A recent survey by Iowa State University shows that more than three of four Iowa farmers believe modern farming relies too heavily on chemicals. The Agricultural Law and Policy Institute study of farmers in individual counties in Pennsylvania, Florida, Wisconsin, Iowa and California finds that from 64 to 88 percent agree that chemicals in groundwater need to be reduced.

But it's a long leap from grass-roots sentiment to effective alliances.

"I don't see these groups coming together," says Carolyn Brickley, senior counsel for the Senate Agriculture Committee. Brickley is widely credited with helping consumer, environmental and farm groups reach agreement on last year's reauthorization of the Federal Insecticide, Fungicide and Rodenticide Act (FIFRA) bill regulating the safe manufacture and use of pesticides. "What made that happen was that the bill ended up being beneficial to all sides," she says. "I don't know that the consensus heralds a new era of cooperation."

**Frown on the farm:** David Senter, executive director of the American Agriculture Movement says, "One of the problems with a lot of these environmental groups is they're great coalition members till they get what they want—then they're gone. They don't want to have anything to do with farm groups anymore."

Environmental organizations are reaching out to progressive farm groups, says Janet Hathaway with the National Resources Defense Council (NRDC), best known for raising the issue of the use of the chemical Alar on



## Learning to use fewer chemicals on the farm

apples. Yet Hathaway admits it will be "difficult to bridge some of the antagonisms and perceived enmity" between farmers trying to make a living and consumers wanting safe food.

In fact, the "Shadow on the Land" report reflected the work of several citizen-action, environmental and farm groups. The Sierra Club has a permanent committee on sustainable agriculture with a number of farm representatives from around the country. A new Sustainable Agriculture Working Group has brought together a variety of Midwest church

**Chemical-intensive, all-out agriculture ruined lots of farmers. The lesson is that there are better, cheaper and healthier ways to grow our food.**

and rural advocacy groups, in addition to the Sierra Club, the Izaak Walton League and Bread for the World.

Helen Waller, a Montana rancher and president of the National Save the Family Farm Coalition, says somewhat hopefully: "I think we can bring the debate to a point where people realize the present farm bill is playing taxpayers, consumers and farmers off

against each other, diverting attention from the huge corporations who are cleaning up in the middle."

For their part, the entrenched establishment of chemical companies, exporters, processors and research labs with vested interests in continued high chemical usage aren't taking this sitting down. The National Agricultural Chemicals Association recently approved a 40 percent hike in its public relations budget. Its tactic is to paint any attempt to reduce chemical use as a "radical" movement toward organic farming.

The market is certainly growing for organic products. But the larger movement's goal is to minimize pesticides, says Hathaway. "They should be used as a last resort, not routinely. To expect to get to no pesticides ever, I doubt it."

Environmental groups have so far focused on the "stick" of tighter standards on allowable pesticide levels in food.

But greater success in the long term may be achieved through the "carrot" of economic and research incentives to encourage more farmers to adopt sustainable practices. Currently, only an estimated 30,000 to 100,000 farmers use low-chemical practices (including organic) out of 2.1 million nationwide.

Farmers who take pride in using modern "scientific" techniques need to be convinced that protecting the environment does not mean a step backward. Low-input sustainable agriculture (LISA) involves sophisticated crop rotation and tillage practices, inte-

grated pest management (including capturing and sterilizing crop-damaging bugs and using predator insects), and even genetically engineered, insect-resistant plants, which are now being developed.

**Chemical reaction:** The USDA claims total research into low-input methods is \$108 million, in addition to another \$11 million in federal funding and \$30-\$40 million in state funding for research at land grant universities. This figure, which many consider to be inflated, represents barely 10 percent of the USDA's research budget.

Former USDA official Garth Youngberg, now director of the Institute for Alternative Agriculture, says the attitude within USDA is beginning to change since the years when Secretary John Block's pro-chemical views put a chill on LISA research.

However, education, research and demonstration projects alone won't address the greatest threat to environmental protection on the farm—the increasing consolidation of agricultural wealth that will put 75 percent of U.S. farm production in the hands of 50,000 farmers by the year 2000.

Solving this dilemma may require more fundamental changes than policy-makers now recognize.

Family farm advocates are once again raising the banner of more effective supply management and higher "loan rates" (which effectively set commodity prices) to provide farmers with a better income from the marketplace. Raising loan rates could cut taxpayer costs, but will encounter stiff opposition from multinational grain exporters who want to keep prices low.

Marty Strange, author of *Family Farming*, argues commodity programs "should be replaced with a farmer program rewarding good farming practices and pegging benefits to the people who farm rather than to commodities they produce."

At minimum, says Waller, farmers must be offered some sort of economic transition aid to help them afford the risk of switching to less-intensive agriculture practices. "Our job is to convince environmentalists and consumers that they won't get their piece in the long term unless they help maintain family farms."

Despite multibillion dollar taxpayer subsidies during the Reagan years, hundreds of thousands of family farmers were forced off their land. Bigger farmers, insurance companies and absentee owners who took over showed even less inclination to practice good stewardship.

If the family farmer's economic survival is ignored in the 1990 farm bill, environmentalists and consumers may find that once the smoke clears and a few token policy changes have been made, degradation of our soil and water and food supply will continue as before.

Urban consumers should heed the challenge issued by the late Dixon Terry, a dairy farmer and former president of the National Save the Family Farm Coalition who brought Jesse Jackson's national campaign to Greenfield, Iowa.

"Whatever direction we take, we must maintain the interlinked concepts of who controls the land and how the land is treated. Our struggle for sustainable agriculture must include the economics to insure widespread diversified family farm control. Only together can we win both struggles. Separated, we will lose it all."

Rod Benson is a speechwriter in the office of Sen. Tom Harkin (D-IA).



By David Beach

# Learning to deal with chemical sensitivity

ON SATURDAYS HELEN MOORE OF RALEIGH, N.C., drives along a portion of Interstate 40 as she heads to the grocery store. If state road crews spray herbicides along her route on Thursday, Friday or Saturday, she is warned by a Department of Transportation employee.

Moore has multiple chemical sensitivities (MCS)—a mystifying chronic health problem also known as chemical hypersensitivity, environmental illness or total allergy syndrome. When she is exposed to herbicides, pesticides or even common household products such as fabric softeners and air fresheners, she becomes weak and disoriented, suffering severe headaches, muscle pain and swelling of the skin.

She's had the problem for 15 years and isn't sure what caused it. She speculates that living in an apartment that had a leaky gas oven and was sprayed monthly to control pests may have affected her immune system.

When she requested notification of highway spraying, state officials not only refused, but also disputed whether the spraying could harm her. She won her point, however, by being polite and persistent.

"As a taxpaying citizen I have a right to use the highways without endangering my health," she says. "Sometimes you have to be a nuisance to protect yourself."

Since then, Moore, who now runs an ecology consulting firm that assists other chemically sensitive persons, has continued to bother state and local authorities. She is promoting a ban on herbicides along state roadways and is campaigning for a pesticide notification law requiring that signs be posted on lawns and in public buildings after spraying. When Raleigh was hit by a gypsy moth infestation several years ago, she organized community protests that prompted a switch from aerial spraying to non-toxic biological controls.

Across the country in the San Francisco Bay area, MCS sufferers have drafted a "Declaration of Rights for the Environmentally Hypersensitive." Susan Molloy, a local activist and editor of *The Reactor*, a newsletter for chemically sensitive people, says that MCS "is a disability, not an illness. People with chemical sensitivities have a right to reasonable accommodation in the workplace, public buildings, hospitals, schools and housing."

Molloy has also worked with the Independent Living Centers in California, an organization that receives state funds to assist the disabled and obtain services for MCS victims. She is trying to get a federal community development block grant to build an ecologically safe apartment complex. And she helped lead a drive against environmental hazards (such as gases from carpeting, adhesives and formaldehyde-laden building materials) in a new wing of a Marin County hospital. She says that the hospital has since tried to reduce indoor pollution and has developed training programs to make its staff aware of the special needs of chemically sensitive patients.

"If I have to go to the hospital, I want to be safe. I want access," Molloy adds. "Just like stairs are a barrier to people in wheelchairs, new carpeting is a chemical barrier to me."

**Sick of being sick:** Helen Moore and Susan Molloy are just two examples of a growing number of politically active people

with MCS. They believe that the modern chemical world is injuring more and more people in unexplained ways—perhaps by disrupting the body's immune system or nervous system.

At the grass roots, MCS activists are joining environmentalists and community groups to fight against pesticide spraying, indoor air pollution and toxic waste dumps—and to fight for chemical right-to-know laws, bans on cigarette smoking and stricter limits for chemical exposures in the workplace.

Such activity by the environmentally ill is a relatively new phenomenon, according to

## ENVIRONMENT

Earon Davis, an attorney with a master's degree in public health who edits the *Ecological Illness Law Report*. He says that for many years MCS sufferers were preoccupied with coping with the illness. Their organizations, such as the Human Ecology Action League (HEAL), focused on providing services such as local support groups, advice on where to obtain medical care from understanding doctors and information on creating a less toxic personal environment through changes in diet, clothing, home furnishings or cleaning products.

"Organizations of victims can't always be expected to be politically effective," Davis says. "Some are struggling to be healthy people and have no energy left for activism. Many don't even want to talk about their problems—they've been told they are crazy so many times that they don't want to stick their necks out. Also, they get sick going to the courthouse, or they can't read a newspaper to find out what's going on because of the chemicals in the paper and ink. It's easy to become isolated."

But chemically sensitive people are becoming more active as they realize that toxic chemicals cause everybody problems, says Ed Randegger of Fort Collins, Colo., who co-edits *The Wary Canary* newsletter. (The name refers to the idea that people with

chemical sensitivities, like the canaries in coal mines, are early warning signs of environmental hazards.) A reader suffering from an exposure to chlordane insecticide and pentacresol wood preservative recently told Randegger: "Lay off that 'sensitive' crap! If your kid plays in the street and is run over by a truck, do you say, 'Poor thing, he's sensitive to Fords'? We're basically dealing with poisons, not frail health."

**Uphill battle:** Recognition of MCS by the medical establishment and government agencies remains a difficult challenge, however. People with MCS typically react to minute amounts of a wide assortment of the chemicals and products encountered in modern life—everything from polyester to detergent, from dry-cleaning solvents to perfume. They often are stricken with multiple symptoms related to the central nervous system (tension, memory loss, fatigue, headache, depression), gastrointestinal tract, joints and muscles, respiratory system, skin, ear, throat or sinuses. The bodily mechanisms by which people become hypersensitive are not understood, although chemicals such as solvents and formaldehyde are suspected sensitizers.

It's not known how many people are affected, but some researchers estimate that

## Researchers estimate that 15 percent of Americans may be hypersensitive to common chemicals.

as much as 15 percent of the population experiences some hypersensitivity to common household products. The Environmental Health Center in Dallas, one of a handful of centers specializing in the care of MCS victims, has treated 17,000 patients in the past 12 years.

Until recently, the chemically sensitive

had few allies, even in the environmental movement. Jay Feldman, national coordinator of the National Coalition Against the Misuse of Pesticides (NCAMP), recalls that when a few environmentally ill people attended NCAMP's early forums in 1984-85 on the adverse health effects of pesticide exposure, they were regarded skeptically.

"They had no medically certified diagnosis of illness," he says. "NCAMP was focusing on the exposure of farmworkers, not long-term, low-level exposures in non-occupational settings. It took a while for us to realize that these people had a valid problem that the medical community was not addressing."

Complicating the quest for recognition are ties between the chemically sensitive and a group of physicians called clinical ecologists or specialists in environmental medicine. MCS patients typically spend years searching for doctors who can treat them, or at least lend a sympathetic ear. Ultimately, many gravitate to clinical ecologists, who seek to detect the triggers in the environment that are causing the patients' symptoms.

The clinical ecologists, however, have been ostracized by the mainstream medical community. Critics call their theories unorthodox and desensitization treatments unscientific. The controversy surrounding their practices casts doubts on chemical sensitivities in general, causing some MCS activists to distance themselves from the clinical ecologists in an effort to separate the two issues.

"It has become not just a situation of convincing people of a new illness but how to unconvince them of the stereotypes of clinical ecologists," says Davis, who has worked on the issue for 10 years. "There are people with a mission to discredit clinical ecologists. I draw the line when they say the illness doesn't exist."

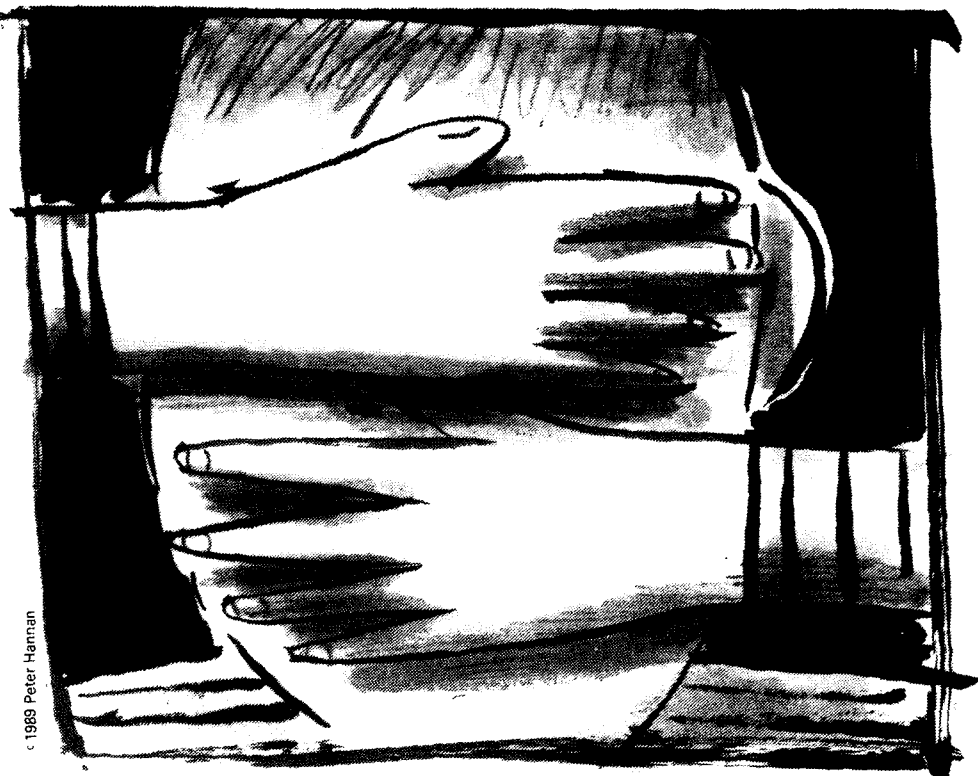
**"Grandma makes me sneeze":** Despite such difficulties, there is increasing awareness to MCS, Davis says. Much publicity has been generated by TV shows and tabloid stories ("I'm allergic to my family!") that focus on the most severe cases, the individuals who were forced from family, home and job to live like hermits in the wilderness.

"They're freak shows, but they get the word out," Davis adds. "That leads to other things. For example, researchers at the National Institute of Health realize they know people who seem to be chemically sensitive. They start wondering about it, start asking questions. We take advantage of that and press for studies."

Since 1985, recognition of MCS by medical and government officials has indeed been growing. The first major U.S. medical publication on MCS, a recent volume in the series *Occupational Medicine: State of the Art Reviews*, surveyed the medical community's diverse views on MCS. The volume's editor, Dr. Mark R. Cullen of the Yale University School of Medicine, concluded that "MCS patients suffer from a real and serious chronic disorder" and that expanded epidemiological and physiological studies are required for a better understanding of the condition.

• A major study on indoor air pollution completed in 1985 for the Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) mentioned chemical sensitivity as a major consequence of chronic exposures to toxic substances indoors. The study's author, Lance Wallace, now an environmental scientist with the EPA, says, "We gave them [activists working on the issue] the first solid information they'd

Continued on following page





## MCS

Continued from page 13

had on how chemical levels are greater indoors than outdoors. It's what they've been saying for years."

- Amendments to the Indoor Air Quality Act, introduced in the Senate in 1988, also identified MCS as a health consequence of indoor pollution.

- The states of New Jersey and Maryland commissioned studies to evaluate the needs of chemically sensitive people. Pennsylvania has established a voluntary registry for chemically sensitive people at risk from pesticides.

**Becoming sensitive to MCS:** Activists trumpet each new supportive statement as fresh vindication, another part of the gradually emerging recognition of MCS. Mary Lamielle, a leading activist in New Jersey, says, "I have been involved in the issue at the state and national levels since 1986, and during that time public officials' reactions have gone from, 'What are you talking about?' to the point now where it's rare that someone won't know what environmental illness is. Now government officials are calling me for more information."

Lamielle has been chemically sensitive for 10 years. She believes she was made ill by fumes from a nearby trucking company and township sewage treatment plant. Once 4,000 gallons of gasoline spilled into the creek behind her property. Gasoline vapors entered her house, and she had to be rushed to a hospital emergency room. Not only did the doctor there have difficulty grasping her problem, but he made her symptoms worse by smoking in her presence.

She says, "I was always interested in environmental issues, but I became active when suddenly I had no options—I was getting sicker and sicker. But while I have desperate needs, I also see everybody else out there at risk, too."

One of the first things Lamielle did was to persuade her state senator to sponsor an "environmental illness" bill to provide services for MCS victims. The legislation, which is still pending, calls for a \$250,000, three-year demonstration program that would identify chemically sensitive persons and document their needs; establish a statewide clearinghouse for information, referrals and advocacy; help people obtain legal, financial and medical services, as well as housing, grants and long-term support; and promote the study of MCS by providing research, organizing conferences and developing educational material.

Lamielle also began educating state health officials about the issue. In 1987 the New Jersey Department of Health commissioned MIT professor Nicholas Ashford to review the current research on MCS and recommend how the state can assist victims. The Ashford report will be out this summer, and Lamielle hopes it will make a strong statement on the needs of the chemically sensitive.

Recently, she founded a new organization, the National Center for Environmental Health Strategies, which will link chemically sensitive people with physicians, researchers, legislators, attorneys, unions, environmentalists and the general public. By building a database and networks among groups, she hopes the center will further raise awareness of MCS and environmental hazards.

Last May, Maryland became the first state

to enact legislation on behalf of chemically sensitive individuals. The bill, which funded a modest \$7,000 study of MCS, was strongly opposed by the chemical industry.

"They lobbied harder on our issue than on anything else," says Linda Davidoff, a Baltimore-area psychologist and MCS sufferer who initiated the effort. "They were afraid of the precedent of a state legislature recognizing MCS and saying something ought to be done."

Davidoff also has interested scientists at the University of Maryland and Johns Hopkins University in developing research programs on MCS. Jeff Paull, program manager for toxicology and risk assessment for the state of Maryland, says that Davidoff has motivated him to do his Ph.D. thesis on MCS at the Johns Hopkins School of Hygiene and Public Health. He will study health policy issues, such as what services are available to MCS victims, which services are helping and how much MCS patients pay out-of-pocket for care. Davidoff, Lamielle and Davis also have helped persuade the American Public Health Association (APHA) to take up the issue.

**"Buildings make me sick":** Specialists in occupational health are frequently confronted with chemically sensitive patients who defy medical categorization and are a challenge to treat, says Judie Guerriero, chair of the APHA Occupational Health Section. Such patients raise questions about how ultra-low levels of exposure cause such problems, or, in the case of "sick building syndrome," why some people do not get better [after the pollution is controlled]. In "sick building syndrome," indoor air quality problems cause sickness among people in the building.

"We are trying to establish a diagnostic definition of the problem so we can study it," Guerriero says. "Of course, the people involved want answers today, and I can't blame them."

Activists do feel a sense of urgency. Each year they see hundreds of new chemicals added to the more than 60,000 already in common use, and only a small percentage are adequately tested for their long-term impact on human health. As with problems like acid rain, it defies common sense to wait for definitive proof of causation before acting.

"Chemical sensitivity is a sign that our system for protecting people from chemicals has failed," says Davis. In a recent article in his newsletter he writes that one reason this happened was that the environmental movement, as it evolved in the '60s and early '70s, embraced conservation at the expense of public health concerns.

"We were so upset about about the endangerment of the bald eagle due to DDT that we didn't bother to read the rest of Rachel Carson's book—the chapters about human health effects. We didn't bother to network with occupational health professionals and industrial hygienists. We had lost touch with the orientation and the people of public health."

"In order to tackle the immense social, economic and political challenges posed by toxic chemicals, it is necessary to reintegrate the environmental and public health movements," he adds. "It is the public health sector, along with political clout, that empowers the local activists, cutting through all the procedures and standards and coming down to this important question: is someone being killed or injured by toxic chemicals?"

David Beach is an Ohio-based journalist.

# Washington's free ride for corporate polluters at Superfund cleanups

By William K. Burke

**A** KEY SEGMENT OF THE FEDERAL Superfund toxic waste cleanup effort has become another Reagan-Bush era environmental boondoggle. The forum for this scam is the natural resource damage assessment portion of Superfund—the federal program intended to clean up the country's worst toxic waste sites. The victims are wetlands, trees, wildlife and land—all the ecosystems contaminated by the estimated 2,000 sites that will eventually need to be cleaned up under Superfund.

The Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) has done little to protect non-human parts of the environment under Superfund. The EPA has consistently interpreted the original 1980 Superfund law to require only "cost effective" cleanups that meet EPA standards for protecting human health.

In most cases this has meant the EPA simply capped the worst areas of toxic contamination and built fences around sites to keep people away. Such solutions can leave water supplies and valuable wetlands—ecologists call them the kidneys of the water cycle because they purify waterways—laced with toxics, sometimes forever.

The natural resource damage assessment program was meant to prevent this type of abuse. It originates in the common law concept that the government is the custodian of the nation's natural resources. It allows federal agencies, usually the Department of the Interior or the National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration (NOAA), and state governments to be appointed as "natural resource trustees." These trustees have legal standing to sue polluters on behalf of land, air, water, plants and animals damaged by toxic waste or oil spills.

**Stumbling blocks:** The 1986 Superfund Amendment and Reauthorization Act strengthened the damage assessment program, at least on paper. But three problems have crippled federal implementation of the program. All three of them stem from the unwillingness of Reagan-Bush agencies to translate congressional anti-pollution laws into effective actions.

- The Department of the Interior, the most important federal natural resource trustee, has avoided conducting full-scale natural resource damage assessments that could eventually bring the government millions of dollars in damages from polluters. Instead, the department has chosen to conduct a series of quick, easy and superficial surveys that generally free polluters from the costs of destroying ecosystems.

- The 1986 Superfund amendments instructed the EPA to actively involve natural resource trustees in every stage of its Superfund cleanups, but a section inserted into the law just before it passed Congress forbids the EPA from providing any Superfund money to conduct natural resource damage assessments.

- According to critics, the rules that the

Interior Department wrote for doing natural resource damage assessments seriously undervalue the costs polluters would have to pay for restoring those resources.

Erik Olson, an attorney with the National Wildlife Fund, says that if Congress doesn't act quickly to correct these problems, Superfund's statute of limitations for natural resource damages at many sites will expire in the next year. In May, Olson told the House subcommittee of fisheries and wildlife conservation that the EPA has treated the possibility of natural resource damage claims as a "stumbling block" and a "bargaining chip" in negotiations with polluters.

Theoretically, an effective natural resource damage assessment program could guarantee that Superfund cleanups completely restore damaged ecosystems. The natural resource trustees can sue polluters

## REGULATION

for damages to the environment while the EPA can sue polluters to force a cleanup to protect human health. If trustees and the EPA cooperated to press both types of claims at each Superfund site, polluters would be forced to pay for permanent cleanups that actually removed toxics from the environment.

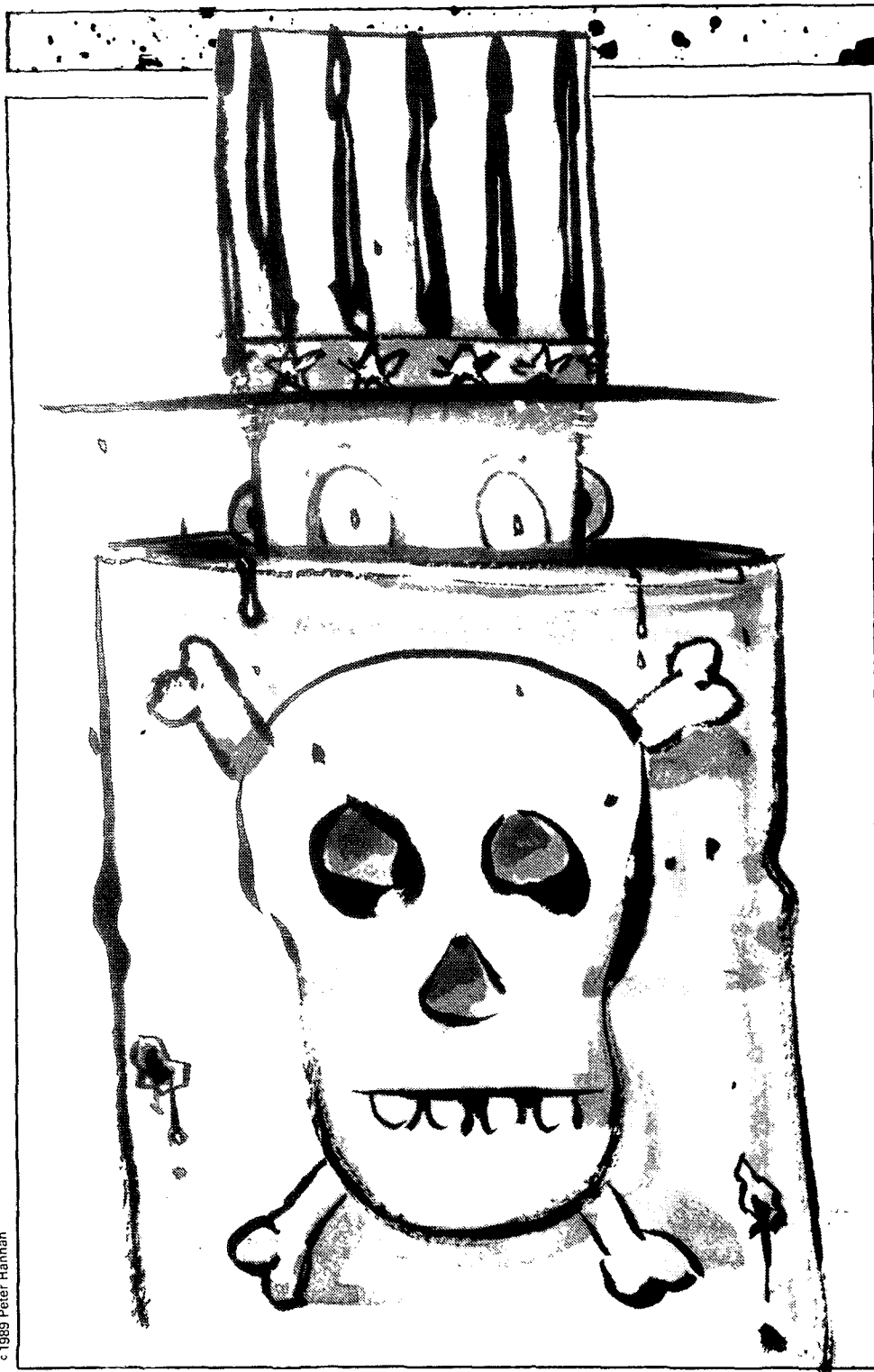
But the natural resource damage assessments needed to press damage claims require wildlife experts, economists, geologists and other expensive technical staff members. A single site's assessment might take years to complete and cost millions of dollars. Environmentalists argue that money spent on assessments at Superfund sites would be paid back many times over when trustees file claims against polluters. But no one really knows, because the Department of the Interior has never actually attempted a full-scale damage assessment at a Superfund site.

**Site unseen:** Instead, Interior, at the EPA's request, created so-called Preliminary Natural Resource Surveys (PNRS). For an average cost of \$2,000, Interior conducts a PNRS to determine whether or not a Superfund site has sustained natural resource damages. The surveyor is allowed, but not required, to actually drive past or walk around the site he or she is surveying.

Olson says the latest available figures show the Interior Department had done 400 of the quickie surveys by January 1, 1988, without following up a PNRS with a full-scale natural resource damage assessment. He told the congressional subcommittee that an Interior official said the surveys often consisted only of a "few phone calls."

"It's a whitewash," comments Will Steele, an aide to Rep. Gerry Studds (D-MA). Steele and others say the PNRS program seems to be a cheap and easy way for the Interior Department and the EPA to discharge its obligation to include natural resource trustees in Superfund cleanups—without causing trouble for corporate polluters. Since there are no experts on the ground at the Super-





fund sites to do in-depth research into damages, the Interior Department rarely is able to prove heavy corporate liability via its PNRS program.

Cecil Hoffman, an Interior Department senior environmental protection specialist, defends the PNRS program. "We started the PNRS system as a means of screening out sites where we did not have sufficient interests at stake to spend a lot of time and effort," she says. Hoffman says the program allows Interior to influence Superfund cleanups without spending the time and money to conduct full-scale damage assessments or file lawsuits.

Hoffman cited Monsanto's Motco Superfund site in Texas, where an Interior Department PNRS convinced Monsanto to buy and gradually clean up polluted wetlands. "It's scattershot and low-key, but it's working," Hoffman said.

But, at best, the PNRS system merely gives the Interior Department an advisory role in Superfund cleanups. Environmentalists want the department to use its natural resource trusteeship powers more aggressively to benefit ecosystems. Instead, the department has seemed willing to bend its natural resource program to benefit polluters. At 32 Superfund sites where the EPA has decided on action for cleanups, the Interior Department has released the polluters from liability for natural resource damages. But, of course, Interior did not conduct natural resource damage assessments at any of those sites.

Interior granted one such release to the

Ottati and Goss/Kingston Steel Drum Superfund Site in Kingston, N.H., despite environmentalists' complaints that the EPA's cleanup plan ignored a marsh adjoining the site contaminated with PCBs and toxic metals. At Seymour Recycling in Indiana, the Interior Department granted a release of natural resource damages even though environmentalists argued the EPA's cleanup left elevated levels of benzene, vinyl chloride and other chemicals in the groundwater supply for 100 homes and businesses.

"Are the natural resource trustees at the federal level basically opening the door and letting the polluters walk out? The answer is in most cases probably yes," Steele says.

Olson reports the example of Illinois' Waukegan Harbor to Congress. "The harbor's sediments have been reported to have PCB concentrations of up to 500,000 parts per million. Fish swimming in the harbor for just a few months have been shown to have levels of PCBs many times the FDA established health levels.... Fish also migrate from many parts of Lake Michigan into the southern part of the lake and may be exposed to PCBs from the site." In the eight years since the EPA issued a report documenting these conditions, the Interior Department has not conducted a natural resource damage assessment of Waukegan Harbor.

**The "fund buster" fallacy:** The 1986 Superfund amendments would seem to preclude this casual approach to assessing natural resource damages. Section 104(b)(2) of the law specifies that the EPA notify natural

resource trustees of potential damages and "seek to coordinate the assessments, investigations and planning," of the cleanup with the trustees. Olson told Congress the EPA has improved its record for notifying trustees under the new law but then read to the subcommittee excerpts from a letter from former EPA chief Lee Thomas to Rep. Studds, dated nearly a year after the new law went into effect, that conceded "the agency generally does not track National Priority List sites for the purpose of identifying injury to natural resources."

A major reason the EPA and Interior avoid implementing an effective natural resource damage program is lack of money. The EPA is forbidden from using Superfund money to pay for restoring damaged natural resources, or even to conduct natural resource damage assessments. Those prohibitions are in a section of the 1986 law, slipped into the tax code provisions of the Superfund amendments just before they passed Congress.

Reagan administration lobbyists for that provision claimed appropriating money from Superfund for natural resource damage assessments would be a "fund buster." And since no federal trustee has ever been budgeted money from outside of Superfund to conduct natural resource damage assessments, the legislation amounted to a veto of the natural resource damage program. But Studds is planning to introduce a bill that would allow natural resource trustees to use Superfund money to conduct the assessments.

Even in economic terms, the logic of the "fund buster" argument is short-sighted. Olson describes a site off the coast of Los Angeles where NOAA believes it could collect \$80 million in natural resource damages if it had the \$1 million to \$2 million required to conduct a damage assessment.

Given the size of the EPA's task under Superfund, it is possible to argue the agency has no business complicating Superfund cleanups by inviting natural resource trustees to force polluters to address natural resource damages after a cleanup has already met the EPA's minimal standards for protecting human health. But the basic principle of ecology is that there can be no separation between human health and the land,

**"Are the natural resource trustees at the federal level basically opening the door and letting the polluters walk out? The answer is...probably yes."**

air, water, plants and animals defined under federal law as "natural resources."

Unfortunately, the federal government has never taken such a holistic view of ecological protection. If it did, the EPA could use the natural resource trustees as allies in a battle to restore the Earth rather than obstacles on the path to a quota of "cleanups." But this environmentalist's fantasy of an EPA would still face the third, and perhaps most formidable, obstacle in the path of natural resource damage claims: the Department of Interior's rules for conducting the assessments.

**The evil of three lessers:** In late June, 41 members of Congress signed a letter to Interior Secretary Manuel Lujan asking that

the department's rules for conducting natural resource damage assessments of oil spills and toxic waste sites not be used to calculate damages from the *Exxon Valdez* disaster. The lawmakers claimed the rules would "seriously undervalue the resources lost by the American public."

Olson says the most important problem with the Interior rules is the so-called "lesser of" standard. This rule requires natural resource trustees to charge polluters for only the least expensive of three options: restoring the damaged resource, acquiring an equivalent resource or paying the "use value" of the damaged or destroyed ecosystem.

In most cases, use value would win such a cost analysis. Olson describes what these rules would mean when applied to Alaska. "If fur seals were killed [the trustees] would get the market value of the pelts, which is \$15 for some species.... The Interior Department has listed things like puffins and shorebirds and come up with values like \$7.88 per bird. Those values come out of theoretical values based on things like how much people will spend on binoculars to go out and see the bird."

Environmentalists would like to see the natural resource trustees bill polluters for the costs of completely restoring damaged habitats, plus any lost use values. The National Wildlife Fund, Public Citizen, the Environmental Defense Fund and 10 states have sued in the U.S. Court of Appeals for the District of Columbia to overturn the Interior Department's natural resource damage assessment rules.

The rules contain other hurdles, such as the need for each trustee to prove it had a "committed use" for each resource and a Catch-22 that damages must exceed assessment costs, even though trustees don't know the extent of damages until they conduct assessments.

**Cleaning up instead of screwing up:** Nevertheless, the present natural resource damage program can work—when implemented by an aggressive trustee. Gordon Johnson of the New York State Attorney General's office tells how his office uses the threat of natural resource damages to enforce cleanups. At a Waterford, N.Y., site where General Electric has polluted groundwater, the company has agreed to a cleanup plan that contains the possibility of \$4 million in natural resource damages. The exact amount GE must pay will depend on how completely it cleans up the site.

And Johnson says GE may have gotten off easily because the New York natural resource damage program is new. "[Now] if [polluters] are willing to clean up fast enough we will be willing to forego natural resource damages. We will be more strict as time goes on and more and more people understand the consequences. We're not going to say clean it up and all is forgiven," Johnson said.

The idea that there's no time to balance corporate profits and ecology is taking hold in states like New York, Colorado and New Jersey, which have implemented aggressive natural resource damage programs as part of their environmental enforcement effort. But while toxic wastes turn wetlands meant to purify water into pollution sources, the Interior Department and the EPA are turning a powerful federal anti-pollution statute into a program that saves polluters millions of dollars, money that could go to clean up wetlands and other vital ecosystems. □

**William K. Burke** writes regularly for *In These Times* on the environment.



In *These Times* first revealed the tragic saga of Jacksonville, Ark., a city many residents refer to as "Dioxinville," in a three-part series by Dick Russell in March 1988. TCDD-dioxin, a byproduct of some types of chemical manufacturing and considered the most lethal substance ever produced by humans, has been detected here at higher levels than anywhere else in the U.S. Today approximately 30,000 barrels of hazardous waste—including Agent Orange produced in Jacksonville by the Hercules, Inc., chemical corporation during the Vietnam War—still await proper disposal inside the gates of a factory that finally ceased operations in 1986.

Residents living near the plant or near one of the two landfills where chemicals were illegally dumped for years continue to suffer from an assortment of health disorders. Many people have died, including infants buried in a local cemetery plot known as "babyland," victims of what relatives allege was chemical poisoning. A controversial plan to incinerate the dioxin-contaminated wastes on-site, endorsed by both the federal Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) and Arkansas state officials despite a city ordinance and ballot initiative opposing it, is scheduled to proceed late this year.

In its 1988 series *In These Times* documented how chemical companies, officials of state and federal agencies, and a local group called Jacksonville People With Pride regularly downplayed, and in some cases covered up, the implications of the "Dioxinville" case. Reporter Dick Russell returned to Jacksonville in July and compiled the following story, which is based on his personal reporting, a continuing series of investigative articles in the *Arkansas Democrat* and the *Dallas Morning News*, and EPA documents obtained by the *Citizen's Clearinghouse for Hazardous Wastes*.

## By Dick Russell

JACKSONVILLE, ARK.

**T**HE FIRST MAJOR SCANDAL INVOLVING POLICIES of the Bush administration's Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) is on the verge of exploding in this community of 29,000 residents, where three dioxin-contaminated areas are on the agency's Superfund list of hazardous waste sites. At issue is the award of \$150,000 in EPA Technical Assistance Grants to a Jacksonville "citizen's group" funded by Hercules, Inc., one of the polluters responsible for this city's dioxin disaster.

Potential fraud and bribery charges are being investigated by both the FBI and the EPA inspector general's office. The federal probe extends to two Arkansas Democrats, U.S. Sen. Dale Bumpers and U.S. Rep. Tommy Robinson, who pushed for the Jacksonville People With Pride Cleanup Coalition's (JPWP-CUC) grant application in letters to the EPA while receiving more than \$30,000 in campaign contributions from the organization and its leading members.

The U.S. Congress created the EPA's Technical Assistance Grants (TAG) program in 1986, and began to accept applications in March 1988. The law's intent was to provide federal funding to groups living near and directly affected by toxic sites on the EPA's Superfund list, giving these groups the opportunity to hire their own independent technical experts to oversee the government's cleanup procedures. Groups directly associated with what the EPA calls "potentially responsible parties," such as the Hercules, Inc., chemical corporation, were specifically forbidden from receiving any money.

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Jacksonville residents living near the Hercules-Vertac plant or near one of the two landfills where chemicals were illegally dumped for years continue to suffer from an assortment of health dangers.

# EPA scandal leaks out in 'Dioxinville,' Ark.

But in the case of Jacksonville, the EPA's Region VI Dallas office bypassed last May the grant application of Friends United for a Safe Environment (FUSE)—a group of residents surrounding the Superfund sites—and instead gave three separate \$50,000 awards to JPWP-CUC. In June, after an outcry from both national and local environmental groups, EPA headquarters in Washington suspended the grants pending completion of an internal investigation.

The awarding of these grants points to "potential corruption here on the part of the Region VI office," says Hugh Kaufman, a well-known "whistleblower" who works for the EPA's hazardous waste siting division in Washington. After hearing about the grants from grass-roots environmental organizations, Kaufman demanded that the agency's inspector general's office look into the questionable awards. The key question, in Kaufman's view, is analogous to Watergate: "What did the EPA know, and when did it know it?"

**Bedding down together:** The origins of possible EPA backroom deals with the People with Pride group and its behind-the-scenes corporate sponsor, Hercules, date back to 1986. Hercules, a Delaware-based multinational that manufactured in Jacksonville about 25 percent of the Agent Orange used during the Vietnam War, had sold its

as much as \$220 million to clean up contaminated areas of a creek, bayou and flood plain near the chemical plant. Hercules officials then wrote the EPA suggesting far less drastic remedial measures. The company, Hercules informed the EPA, was also "prepared to embark on a public education program to inform the residents of Jacksonville of the facts and the associated risks" and "would welcome the cooperation and active participation of the EPA."

In September 1986 Hercules enlisted the services of an advertising agency, Resneck Stone Ward and Associates of Little Rock, located about 12 miles from Jacksonville. One month later a new coalition calling itself Jacksonville People With Pride (JPWP) sprung up—established by Mike Wilson, a local attorney and Jacksonville's state representative. Its slick brochure announced a goal of fostering "a positive image for Jacksonville with regard to environmental issues." The 16-page booklet insisted that Jacksonville was no more contaminated than any other industrial area in the country.

What was not publicly known at the time was that Hercules, through its newly hired ad agency, had "agreed to support" JPWP, as the agency's vice-president, Millie Ward, described it in a recent interview with the *Arkansas Democrat*. That support, said Ward, included the ad agency's producing JPWP's brochure and newsletters, as well as making direct donations to JPWP. Hercules "reviewed" most of the JPWP projects, according to Ward. When the Jacksonville phone number listed for JPWP in its literature was dialed, it was call-forwarded to the ad agency.

The financial relationship between JPWP and Hercules was no secret, according to Ward. It hadn't been publicly acknowledged before because "no one ever asked us about it."

At the time JPWP was established, Mike Wilson's law firm represented the Vertac company (he has since set up his own private practice). Wilson also owns a half-interest

in 160 acres near Jacksonville's contaminated landfills. His father Pat, owner of the First Jacksonville Bank and head of the city's Water Commission, has long slighted citizens' concerns about (and EPA tests documenting) contaminated water in residential wells near the same sites.

JPWP's mission, Mike Wilson told *In These Times* in an interview in 1988, was to set the record straight about "the distortions, half-truths and outright falsities" being disseminated by local environmental groups about Jacksonville's contamination. The "overblown" pollution talk, he contended, was bad for business.

Wilson has always strongly supported the EPA's and Arkansas' incineration plans for disposing of the 30,000 contaminated barrels at the Hercules/Vertac site. In July 1986, shortly before JPWP was formed, he had written the EPA apologizing for the "reprehensible actions" of certain outspoken incineration opponents. Then in December 1986, immediately after congressional amendments to the Superfund law established the TAG program, Wilson wrote to then-EPA Administrator Lee Thomas requesting information about how to apply for the grant awards.

**No problem:** Meanwhile, Hercules had received permission from the EPA's Region VI office to conduct its own study of Jacksonville's contamination levels in 1987. Though the company tested only a fraction of the area initially tested by the EPA, and though the EPA tested only 10 percent of Hercules' samples, the regional office eventually accepted Hercules' assessment that these levels weren't as high as it had thought. Kate Arthur, then the EPA's regional technical adviser, informed a 1988 meeting of a Jacksonville citizen's group, People Against a Chemically Contaminated Environment, that, based upon Hercules' findings, she saw no reason to spend millions of dollars cleaning up dioxin-contaminated areas in Rocky Branch Creek and Bayou Meto.

The EPA's Kaufman responded to Arthur's statement this way: "The EPA spent close to

## ARKANSAS

facility to Vertac Chemical in 1976. Both companies have since settled out of court with citizens who sued because of detrimental health effects. And, under the Superfund law, both companies remain liable for substantial cleanup costs in Jacksonville. In 1987 Vertac declared bankruptcy and abruptly left Jacksonville, seeking to avoid its share of the burden. Hercules, not wanting to be left holding the bag, has continually sought to downplay the extent of the contamination.

In 1986 the EPA released the results of an agency study determining that it might cost



\$1 million of taxpayer money for a pretty detailed analytical regimen. Then, as a result of negotiations [between the EPA and Hercules] that may or may not have been legal, Region VI's position is that the EPA's million-dollar program is a failure and their testing is invalid."

These weren't the only "negotiations" going on. In August 1988, after EPA scientists found soil samples containing dioxin above its "action level" of one part per billion in two homeowners' yards near the chemical plant, the EPA decided to temporarily evacuate these families and two neighboring families during a \$6 million cleanup. Upon hearing about the EPA's plan, Hercules' John Frawley, the company's general manager for health and environment, wrote the EPA's Arthur: "We are concerned about your proposal to evacuate the residents of these homes during the excavation to avoid dust exposure.... We envision the creation of a state of hysteria in which the entire community will demand evacuation.... Please consider the emotional impact."

Frawley also wrote that the EPA's proposed plan "could result in loss of credibility and perhaps ridicule of either Hercules or the EPA shortly after the action is taken—especially when the EPA and Hercules know that a change in the action level has been proposed.... [The previous month EPA headquarters had announced it was considering relaxing its dioxin action level substantially.] We believe the responsible position for Hercules and the EPA to take is to inform the public of the levels found in their yards in a calm, scientifically sound public meeting.... The residents should be reassured of the safety of their property."

That was precisely the course the EPA's regional office pursued. At public meetings in Jacksonville the agency indicated that the dioxin levels detected at residences near the plant did not threaten the public's health.

In December Arthur addressed the Jacksonville Rotary Club, saying the EPA would likely soon give a clean bill of health to all homes near the Hercules/Vertac site, and that the EPA saw no need for further testing there. The four families have since moved back to their homes.

**Playing TAG:** At the same time, negotiations between the EPA's TAG program and Hercules' front group, JPWP, were underway as well. By law, the EPA could accept only one TAG applicant per site. By the summer of 1988, Wilson knew that several Jacksonville environmental groups also were considering filing for the grants and that they had gotten wind of JPWP's similar plans. So he invited them to merge with JPWP's application.

Alsie Glover, who lives between the two local landfills contaminated with dioxin, responded to Wilson's invitation by offering one of her own: she asked JPWP to join with her environmental group, FUSE, since "we feel our community application will be strongest if the leadership comes from the people living closest to the sites." She also cited her concerns about JPWP.

Wilson, maintaining that his group represented the largest cross section of Jacksonville residents, declined Glover's invitation. Then, after adding "Cleanup Coalition" to JPWP's name, he enlisted a professional grant writer from Hercules' ad agency to draw up the formal proposal to the EPA. And he began contacting friends in high places, soliciting their support.

Two of the friends he contacted were Rep. Robinson and Sen. Bumpers. Robinson, who

**September 1986**—Hercules, Inc., former Agent Orange manufacturer in Jacksonville, hires Resneck Stone Ward & Associates advertising agency

**October 1986**—Jacksonville People With Pride (JPWP) established by Mike Wilson

**December 1986**—JPWP applies for EPA TAG awards

**January 1987**—JPWP brochure is published after "review" by Hercules

**1987**—Hercules conducts reassessment of dioxin contamination for the EPA

**Summer 1988**—JPWP Cleanup Coalition submits grant application to the EPA

**Summer 1988**—Hercules cautions the EPA to downplay dioxin dangers

**November 1988**—EPA headquarters knows about Hercules/JPWP link

**Early 1989**—At the EPA's request, JPWP Cleanup Coalition resubmits application for TAG award—deletes corporate members

**May 1989**—JPWP Cleanup Coalition is awarded \$150,000 from the EPA TAG program

is from Jacksonville, had been outspoken about the urgency of the local dioxin problem prior to JPWP's formation. Early in 1986 he had even written a letter to the EPA asking it to take emergency measures. "The presence of toxic waste must now be viewed as consisting of immediate danger," Robinson wrote. But since then the congressman has stopped pushing for EPA action.

From 1986 to 1988, according to records in the Arkansas secretary of state's office, Robinson received \$24,450 in political contributions from people linked to JPWP. These included \$6,500 from the Wilson family, \$3,200 from the law firm representing Vertac and \$5,250 from members of JPWP. On Aug. 24, 1988, and again on March 24, 1989, Robinson wrote letters to the EPA's regional administrator in Dallas, Robert Layton, strongly endorsing JPWP's TAG application.

Sen. Bumpers, who also wrote the EPA on Wilson's behalf, received \$9,250 in 1986 from 17 members of a law firm that then belonged to JPWP and had represented Vertac Chemical in several lawsuits. Arkansas' other senator, David Pryor, sent a similar letter to the EPA, though there is no record of his having received JPWP-linked funds.

While spokespeople from the offices of both Robinson and Bumpers have denied any link between the contributions and the politicians' intervention in the TAG process, the EPA's Kaufman takes a different view. "You've got elected officials writing letters saying, 'give these guys the grant,'" he says. "If the officials who took the money knew that the group included the polluter, they were then involved in fraud and potential bribery."

Dan Sweeney, assistant director of the EPA inspector general's office in Washington, says that the investigation into the contributions "will be the purview of the FBI."

**A Herculean conflict of interest?** EPA officials in Washington were aware of the link between JPWP and Hercules as early as November 1988, when the national project manager of the EPA's Superfund community relations program, Daphne Gemmill, voiced her concerns about possible conflict of interest at a meeting about the TAG program sponsored by the Citizen's Clearinghouse for Hazardous Wastes (CCHW).

After the meeting, Lois Gibbs, CCHW's executive director, decided that Gemmill's concerns needed to be detailed in a formal complaint to the EPA. So on Dec. 19, 1988, Gibbs wrote a letter to Gemmill that read in part: "Potential Responsible Parties (PRPs) are actively forming phony 'community groups' in order to apply for TAG funding. This has occurred in Jacksonville, Ark., with full knowledge of the EPA. It is outrageous that the EPA sees no problem with this and is allowing this group to be considered for TAG funding. It will completely undermine the TAG program if industry is allowed to control it. Applying for the TAG grants is difficult enough without having to compete

against well-funded PRP front groups staffed with professional grant writers."

According to EPA regulations, groups seeking TAG grants are not eligible for funding if they contain corporate members of any kind, as JPWP's initial application did. So, on December 30 of last year Wilson was informed by EPA Region VI that "it appears that there are other than individual members of the JPWP-CUC. If this is the case ... the coalition will be ineligible" for the funds.

Wilson responded quickly, deleting Hercules from his application. He also eliminated a Little Rock law firm that represented Hercules, Ensco (an early contender for the Jacksonville incineration contract), and all other companies that had appeared on the initial application, and sent the EPA a revised form containing the names of more than 1,000 individuals.

Then, under a Freedom of Information Act request, he obtained from the EPA a copy of the grant application from his group's only remaining competitor, the FUSE community group. After reviewing FUSE's proposal, he wrote a letter to the EPA contesting FUSE's claim to represent a cross section of Jacksonville. It read in part, "The 'project managers' are self-appointed persons who have made various financial claims against the companies responsible for contamination, the city itself and anyone else they can think of.... Their methods have ranged from mere misinformation to deceit to outright false statements, as you at the EPA are well aware."

**The storm erupts:** On May 23 of this year the *Arkansas Democrat* revealed the contents of a memorandum leaked to the newspaper by a worker involved in the EPA's cleanup at the Hercules/Vertac plant. It said that excessively high levels of wind-borne particles contaminated with dioxin had been measured there in January but the EPA had not notified the public or state pollution control officials at that time.

The next day the gathering storm over the EPA broke when the *Democrat* reported that the TAG award had gone to JPWP and that local grass-roots leaders were outraged.

When asked by the *Democrat* about JPWP's possible ties to Hercules, Wilson responded, "To my knowledge, Hercules has never been a member of JPWP." But at a press conference on May 25, Wilson indicated otherwise. Although he accused the *Democrat* of printing a story full of "half-truths," he also admitted that Hercules had been a JPWP member, along with 53 other businesses.

On June 6, U.S. Rep. James Florio (D-NJ), author of the 1986 Superfund amendments that created the TAG program, demanded an explanation from the EPA about the JPWP grant award.

Arkansas Rep. Robinson, when queried about the situation, saw matters differently. "Any time multiple groups compete for limited funds, some will be disappointed," he

said. "I see no reason to delay the important work that the grants are designed to facilitate by waiting on an exhaustive review of the program."

EPA headquarters, however, was clearly nervous. "The award of these grants has become a can of worms that's wide open and smells bad," Tim Brincefield, the EPA's acting manager of TAG, admitted to the *Democrat*, adding that he was "kicking the hot potato upstairs."

In Washington, Lew Crampton, special assistant to the administrator, took the "hot potato" directly to Bush-appointed EPA chief William Reilly. "We decided it would be best to suspend the grant and take a fresh look at the situation," Crampton says. "The regional office is doing an internal review now. Clearly, there were some difficulties, because this was the first time where competing applications existed. I don't think it was fraudulent, but I'm sure the inspector general and FBI will sort out the situation and come to whatever conclusion is warranted."

One unanswered question is what the EPA's Region VI office knew about the Hercules/JPWP connection. There seem to be conflicting views between the EPA's Washington headquarters and its regional office over what the office knew about that connection.

The EPA's Brincefield says, "My understanding is that the regional office knew that Hercules provided the seed money for JPWP to form. When the region found out, they told JPWP it would be ineligible for the grants unless it paid the money back to Hercules. It's my understanding they agreed to pay it back and they did repay it."

But Trisha McKinstry, who handles both the JPWP and Hercules accounts at the Little Rock ad agency, told the *Arkansas Democrat* in June that JPWP had not yet returned any money to Hercules.

And Roger Meacham of the EPA's Region VI office claims, "We knew nothing of the seed money or that Hercules made any donation to JPWP. We awarded the grant strictly on the merits of its application." Those merits, according to the EPA's scoring system, gave Wilson's JPWP precedence over FUSE because its community relations plan was stronger. "The story of JPWP," *Arkansas Democrat* columnist John R. Starr wrote recently, "is quickly turning into the most disgusting chapter in the political history of Central Arkansas."

As *In These Times* went to press, EPA headquarters announced on July 26 that the grants to JPWP were "being annulled" and that the Jacksonville TAG process will start again from scratch. Whether or not the money will eventually go to a legitimate citizens group remains an open question. Otherwise it will be difficult, if not impossible, for the EPA to maintain any credibility in the Jacksonville situation.

In mid-July a coalition of environmental groups, including Greenpeace and the National Toxics Campaign, traveled to Jacksonville with endorsements from grass-roots environmentalists in 28 states and demanded a congressional investigation into the practices of EPA Region VI.

Local activist Patty Frase says about the situation, "JPWP has turned out to be just the front for industry's own welfare program, which the EPA seems quite willing to administer. But while they're all cozily in bed together, this community is finally starting to wake up to what's really going on." □

**Dick Russell** covers environmental issues for *In These Times*.

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"...with liberty and justice for all"

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## The state of the workers in the workers' state

Caught between the pressure of widespread strikes by Soviet coal miners and attacks on his policies by Communist traditionalists, Mikhail Gorbachov had come down on the side of the miners as *In These Times* went to press. First he praised them for "taking things into their own hands" and forcing the kind of change he believes is necessary to make *perestroika* succeed. Then he reversed an earlier decision—made in the wake of crushing defeats of Communist Party candidates—to postpone the first-ever local government council elections until 1990. The miners have demanded local elections in order to rid themselves of the old-line city and regional officials appointed by the party.

These moves by Gorbachov are attempts to align himself and his wing of the party with the millions of Soviet workers who until now have been skeptical—if not hostile—toward *perestroika* and the Soviet leader. Unable to move the ranks of party bureaucrats out of their traditional way of doing business, Gorbachov now hopes to go around them by jumping in front of the workers' parade. The Soviet leaders' enthusiastic encouragement of the strikers brings to mind Charlie Chaplin's *Modern Times*—Chaplin, chasing a truck that has dropped its red danger flag, winds up in the forefront of a march of striking workers who surge around a corner in back of him. With the party having lost its credibility and now rapidly losing its authority, Gorbachov is clearly hoping to win back both.

**Opportunism or opportunity?** It's too easy to be cynical and dismiss his moves as simple opportunism. Except for his treatment of the Baltic people's front movements, this is the first massive popular movement to test Gorbachov's relative commitment to reform and the party apparatchiks. In both cases he appears to have come down more or less on the side of the popular movements. While the nationalist movements present specific problems and demands in each area—the Baltic republics, Armenia, Georgia, etc.—the recent wave of strikes is the first episode of dissent that directly affects all of the Soviet Union, and at a basic level. Furthermore, unlike the intelligentsia, which has been *perestroika's* most solid base of support, the strikers provide a social base that in the workers' state is unassailable.

Then, too, Gorbachov is now the Soviet president, a position that is directly answerable not to the party, but to the legislature. This vastly increases his room to maneuver in his struggle against the party conservatives. To do so, however, Gorbachov must rely on the people. He must succeed in making himself credible in their eyes, which means he must make real concessions to democratic rights. His response to the strikers indicates that he is willing to go a long way toward this end. Whether it will be enough to win back the party's authority remains to be seen. In any case it is good news for the Soviet people.

## The summer spook season is here again

Washington's latest juicy spy scandal couldn't have been better timed—at least for Ted Koppel, John Le Carre and the HUD miscreants. *Nightline* gets a chance to hype its ratings with a Viennese version of *Dallas*; Le Carre's intelligent spy novel, *Russia House*, already at the top of America's summer reading list, gets a topical boost; and the sleazes who steal from housing programs for the "undeserving" poor are happy to see the media spotlight shift elsewhere.

As *In These Times* went to press, the scandal appeared to be more sizzle than steak. Reports were that the government lacked sufficient evidence to prosecute senior State Department official Felix S. Bloch for passing diplomatic secrets to the Soviets. The FBI, press accounts said, was settling for surveilling Bloch while the media surveilled the surveillers.

The Reagan-Bush era has been characterized by a thick interweave of national security, defense and espionage—scandals that leave the message with the citizenry that the Pentagon, the State Department and the national security establishment, no less than HUD, are no more than federal cows there for the milking by the corrupt and the cynical.

By an arcane accounting to which the public is not privy, some of those who deal and double-deal with our nominal enemies are termed heroes, as in the case of Oliver North. Others are branded as traitors. The difference seems to be that the former end up on the lecture circuit, the latter in Leavenworth.

*In These Times* believes that to guarantee our life, liberty and pursuit of happiness, Americans must take greater control over our nation's basic economic and foreign policy decisions. We believe in a socialism that fulfills rather than subverts the promise of American democracy, where social needs and rationality, not corporate profit and greed, are the operative principles. Our pages are open to a wide range of views, socialist and non-socialist, liberal and conservative. Except for editorial statements appearing on the editorial page, opinions expressed in columns and in feature or news stories are those of the authors and are not necessarily those of the editors. We welcome comments and opinion pieces from our readers.

(ISSN 0160-5992)

Published 41 times a year: weekly except the first week of January, first week of March, last week of November, last week of December; bi-weekly in June through the first week in September by the Institute for Public Affairs, 2040 N. Milwaukee Ave., Chicago, IL 60647, (312) 772-0100.

Member: Alternative Press Syndicate

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This issue (Vol. 13, No. 31) published August 2, 1989, for newsstand sales August 2-29, 1989.



# LETTERS

## Off the Marx

JOHN JUDIS (*ITT*, JUNE 21) IS MISTAKEN IN ASSERTING categorically that Marx believed socialism would be "achieved through violent revolution." Judis observes further that from 1875 to the Russian Revolution, socialist parties in Europe and the U.S. "diverged from Marx's rigid formulations," presumably of violent revolution.

Initially, Marx and Engels did expect successful working-class uprisings to follow the bourgeois revolutions of 1848-50. But as Engels later acknowledged, they soon concluded they were wrong. They did not, in fact, concern themselves often with explicit modes of revolutionary change. But in 1872, during the First International's Hague Congress, Marx told a workers' mass meeting in Amsterdam: "We do not deny that there are countries, such as America, England, and I would add Holland if I knew your institutions better, where the working people can achieve their goal by peaceful means."

A few years later he wrote: "If, for instance, in Britain or the United States the working class should win a majority in Parliament or in Congress, then it could in a constitutional manner abolish the laws and institutions obstructing its advancement." After Marx's death in 1883, Engels included France among the nations specified as capable of peaceful, constitutional revolution. He indicated what distinguished these nations: "One can picture the old society growing into the new one peacefully in countries where the National Assembly concentrates all power in its hands, where anything one wishes may be done constitutionally as soon as one is backed by the majority of the nation." After Germany repealed its Bismarckian anti-socialist laws in the early 1890s, Engels envisaged the possibility of an eventual socialist majority emerging there.

Lenin, later seeking to reconcile his embrace of the necessity of violent socialist revolution with the Marx-Engels view, argued that the rise of militarism and imperialist bureaucracies in democratic capitalist countries since their day had eliminated the possibility of peaceful transformation.

Marx's and Engels' predictions were often wrong. But their views merit accurate reporting.

Max Gordon  
Boca Raton, Fla.

## Moonwalk

I AM SOMEWHAT SURPRISED AT YOUR STAND ON the flag issue (*ITT*, July 5). Considering your positions on common(ism) food, common(ism) clothing, common(ism) housing and common(ism) wealth, I would think you would be more understanding of those demanding a common(ism) symbol.

When I buy a flag, it becomes my property to do with as I please. If my actions hurt another, I owe reasonable physical or financial restitution, and government has a right to intercede. Likewise if those actions were limited by some explicit or implicit contract. The same is true of buying video tapes, audio tapes, a car, a home, a business, apartments, land, food, water, etc. You recognize these inalienable property rights

with an inexpensive flag but apparently in not much else.

Murder, embezzlement and pollution have served as political expressions for centuries, i.e. war, civil and otherwise. They are historically more common and much more effective methods of social-political change than flag burning.

Nick Schroeder  
Colorado Springs, Colo.

## Phantom aid

THE SUPPOSED AGREEMENT ON AID TO EDUCATION mentioned by John B. Judis (*ITT*, July 5) is not reflected in federal and state budgets for the coming fiscal year. There simply isn't enough money being appropriated to deal with a current crisis that threatens to degrade our primary and secondary education for 40 years.

This crisis is the retirement of approximately half of the teaching staffs that began a year or two ago and will continue in the next few years. The only hope for recruiting superior replacements for these retirees is to raise the starting salaries for new teachers, especially for mathematics and science slots.

Even Arkansas, whose governor is one of the few politicians plugging better education, is balking at raising the appropriations for the state's education system. Congress has swept the need for federal subsidies to the states to raise teacher salaries under the carpet. You cannot get most members of Congress to comment on this!

The chances of improving education in the future are also being worsened by the failure of the White House and Congress to lay out the kind of money required to shore up the American family through paid maternal leave and adequate day care for the children of working mothers. There is ample evidence now that the crumbling American family, which has a 50 percent divorce rate today, has produced children with poor self-images, and that this cripples children in school.

There is very little hope for revitalizing our industrial system unless there is a drastic shift in spending priorities in Washington, away from the arms race to all the programs that work for a new generation of healthier, psychologically sound and well-educated youth. We will otherwise see the ownership and top management of our best industry in foreign lands, while our second best industry will fade away.

Frederick S. Lightfoot  
Greenport, N.Y.

## Fincapp remembered

KUDOS TO WOODY IGOU FOR HIS PIECE ON PHILOSOPHER Magnus Fincapp (*ITT*, June 21). However, I must take issue with the omission from his essay of a discussion of one of Fincapp's great works from his very, very ordinary period.

I am speaking, of course, of "MY OTHER CAR IS A PIECE OF SHIT, TOO" (*Road and Track* magazine, February 1986). In this work, we do find the evidence of ouzo abuse chronicled by Igou and his otherwise splendid commentary. However, we also find here Fincapp at his cutest, reflecting an ironic prole self-loathing rather than the challenge of the later "HOW'S MY DRIVING? CALL 1-800-EAT-SHIT."

But I quibble. It would be impossible to improve upon Igou's sodden memorial to this great innovator. However, I thought it appropriate to remind your readers that even as Fincapp was declining and showing signs of renal failure, enough sparks of his old self remained that he could engage in inappropriate chortling with respect to the great issues of our day.

Andrew D. Thomas  
Evansville, Ind.

## Cracked bell

THE "LOGICAL FLAW" IN YOUR ARGUMENT (Editorial, July 5) is that any and all flag burners must be "crazies on the left." How exactly is it that you can presuppose the motives of a person using such a broadly interpreted symbol for self-expression? If what the flag stands for is democracy and civil rights, then I too would consider those who burn it "crazy." But what if it also "stands for" capitalism? Or the majority of wars the U.S. has involved itself in? Or an array of other shameful acts? And what if some people are getting a little tired of what America stands for and want to make provocative statements about what it actually is?

I notice you try to qualify your epithet with the phrase "as was the case here." And just what was it about the "case" here? Was it the case Gregory Johnson would make for a radical redistribution of wealth (recall *In These Times*' squeamish endorsement of Capitol Hill salary hikes) or the fact that it directly affronted an electoral process, albeit the other one than the one *In These Times* embraces?

Let freedom someday ring. I just wish your defense had rung a little more clearly.

Carol Reid  
Albany, N.Y.

Editor's note: The truth is we think Gregory Johnson is a political ding-dong.

## Desecration of justice

THE PRESIDENT'S VOICE QUIVERED WITH EMOTION during his June 27 press conference when he said, "The flag of the United States should never be the object of desecration! Flag burning is wrong."

But since when is Mr. Bush—who belongs in prison himself—so concerned over what is wrong?

As of June 27 there were some 41 co-sponsors in the Senate and more than 100 in the House of Representatives for a constitutional amendment prohibiting flag burning as a form of free speech. All night June 28 members of the House waxed eloquent in nostalgia and praise for Old Glory and abhorrent of anyone who would stoop so low as to "desecrate" our flag. How does one desecrate dishonor by exposing it?

Where in all this is any concern for the real wrong, the overriding desecration, that passes unmentioned? Where is concern for the injustice, the destruction, the suffering resulting from historic and present U.S. policy?

What about a nation of "Brotherhood from Sea to Shining Sea" built on genocide, which continues genocidal policies to this day? What about the Big Mountain Navajo being forced from their lands for energy development?

What about a government that has lied and continues to lie to its people about the dangers of nuclear weapons testing, nuclear power generation, pesticide use?

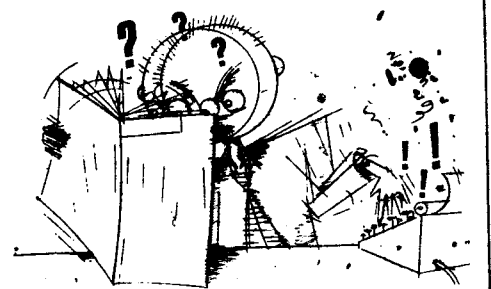
What about top government officials breaking the law with impunity?

What about a foreign policy so unjust as to be putrid?

Until the U.S. flag truly represents peace, ecological responsibility and justice, I can't respect it or find within myself any criticism for those who "desecrate" it. I can't in good conscience pledge allegiance to that flag. It's beyond me how a people responsible for so much injustice and suffering in the world can so totally deny that responsibility.

Rather than make flag burning illegal, wouldn't it be more constructive to consider why people find such protest necessary?

Constance Reed  
Hope, Idaho



## SYLVIA



by Nicole Hollander



# S&L hell: loan wolves howl all the way to the bank

By David M. Kotz

We've grown accustomed to learning about economic problems that keep getting bigger. The budget and trade deficits of the '80s came to public attention as large, scary numbers were announced. And those numbers were soon replaced by a series of much bigger numbers as both deficits rose rapidly.

This familiar process of rapid escalation of the dollar size of a crisis produces a numbing effect. How can one get upset at the current estimate of the size of a problem when it will probably soon be doubled or tripled?

The saving and loan association (S&L) crisis is perhaps the most extreme example of this syndrome. In March of 1986 Edwin Gray, then chairman of the Federal Home Loan Bank Board (FHLBB), warned that resolving the S&L crisis would cost \$16 billion. In December, 1987 the new chairman of the FHLBB, M. Danny Wall, estimated a \$17.4 to \$22.7 billion cost. Seven months later he upped it to \$30.9 billion and three months later, in October of 1988, to \$45-50 billion.

**Bailout bonanza:** The Bush administration's S&L bailout bill, sent to Congress in February of this year, placed the price tag at \$126 billion. Three weeks later, the administration raised the cost estimate to \$157.6 billion. Of this latest estimate, \$135 billion represents the funds required to bail out the depositors of insolvent S&Ls, with the remainder largely going to pay interest on bonds sold to raise the funds needed. Some experts warn that the total cost could go as high as \$200 billion. In three years, the official estimate grew nearly tenfold. (By comparison, the combined cost of the past public bailouts of PennCentral, Lockheed, New York City, Chrysler, Continental Illinois National Bank and the Farm Credit System came to \$18 billion.)

Many commentators warned that the federal budget deficits and trade deficits would cause the sky to fall. The fact that it has not might lead to complacency regarding the current headline-grabbing debt crisis, but that would be a mistake. While the budget and trade deficits are serious problems, they do not represent debts that Americans are likely to have to pay back any time soon, or even in the future. But the S&L bailout cost will indeed have to be paid, with most of the burden likely to fall on the taxpayers. The Financial Democracy Project, a coalition pressing for a progressive solution to the crisis, has estimated that the proposed bailout could cost taxpayers as much as \$1,000 per household on average.

How did this enormous crisis develop? How did it grow so rapidly? Where did the countless billions in depositors' money, which the S&Ls no longer have and the taxpayers are now asked to repay, end up?

**Home-loan history:** Savings and loan associations developed in the early 19th century as specialized financial institutions that took in small savings deposits and lent money to enable people to buy a home. Until recently S&Ls were all "mutuals," meaning they were owned by their depositors rather than profit-seeking shareholders. Along with other financial in-

stitutions, they suffered from the stormy course of American financial history up through the Great Depression.

In 1933-34 the wave of New Deal legislation that created a new regulatory system for commercial banks also set up a system for the S&Ls. The Federal Home Loan Bank Board (FHLBB) was given regulatory authority over S&Ls, and the Federal Savings and Loan Insurance Corporation (FSLIC) was created to insure S&L deposits. This regulatory apparatus helped establish stable institutions to provide financial resources for homeownership.

After World War II the system—supplemented by other federal programs to steer financial resources into housing—worked reasonably well. Millions of Americans got mortgages on favorable terms. From 1950 through 1970, 31 million housing units were built, including 20 million single-family homes. The percentage of owner-occupied housing units rose rapidly from 43.6 percent in 1940 to 61.9 percent in 1960, then inched up through 1980 to 64.4 percent.

S&Ls provided the bulk of the mortgage financing for this vast expansion of homeownership and grew rapidly during this period. In 1945 S&L assets were less than 5 percent as large as commercial bank assets, but by 1965 they had grown to 39 percent as large as the commercial banks. Despite the rapid expansion, the life of an S&L was tranquil. The roughly 5,500 S&Ls took in deposits through passbook savings accounts paying low interest rates and lent most of the deposit money out for home mortgages in their local area at rates 2.5 to 3 percentage points over the rate they paid their depositors. The difference covered the S&Ls' administrative costs. Failures were almost unknown among S&Ls through the mid '60s, and the few that occurred were associated with criminal activity.

Federal regulations insured S&L deposits regardless of an institution's financial condition. This prevented the fear-driven runs on S&Ls that had closed healthy

institutions as well as ailing ones in the past. S&Ls' lending activities were limited to such safe areas as home mortgages and government securities. The regulatory authorities set interest rate ceilings to effectively keep S&L deposit rates at a level slightly above the commercial bank rate. The regulators set the deposit rates at a level that would assure an adequate spread between mortgage and deposit interest rates, thus assuring that well-managed S&Ls would remain healthy.

**From stability to crisis:** The smooth working of the S&Ls was not isolated from the rest of the economy. From the mid '40s to the late '60s, the American economy as a whole had only mild ups and downs. Despite conservative politicians' constant warnings, there was little inflation and low interest rates promoted rapid economic growth.

In the late '60s conditions began to change, as the economy entered what would turn out to be a long period, not yet over, of instability and stagnation. Inflation began to rise, and in the '70s it became a major problem. With it came rising interest rates as lenders demanded higher rates to compensate themselves for the depreciation of the value of their loans caused by inflation. From 1950 to 1965 interest rates on 3 month treasury bills varied between 1 percent and 4 percent, but from 1966 to 1979 these rates ranged as high as 10 percent.

The high interest rates threatened to undermine the ability of the S&Ls to obtain deposits. People getting 5.25 percent interest on their savings heard about the high money market rates and wondered why little folks couldn't get such rates. Wall Street saw a profit opportunity, and Money Market Mutual Funds (MMMFs) were born. Beginning in 1972, they allowed middle-income savers to buy shares, the proceeds of which were invested in large denomination securities that paid high money market rates. As MMMFs expanded during the late '70s,

people made large withdrawals from savings and loans, a process known as "disintermediation."

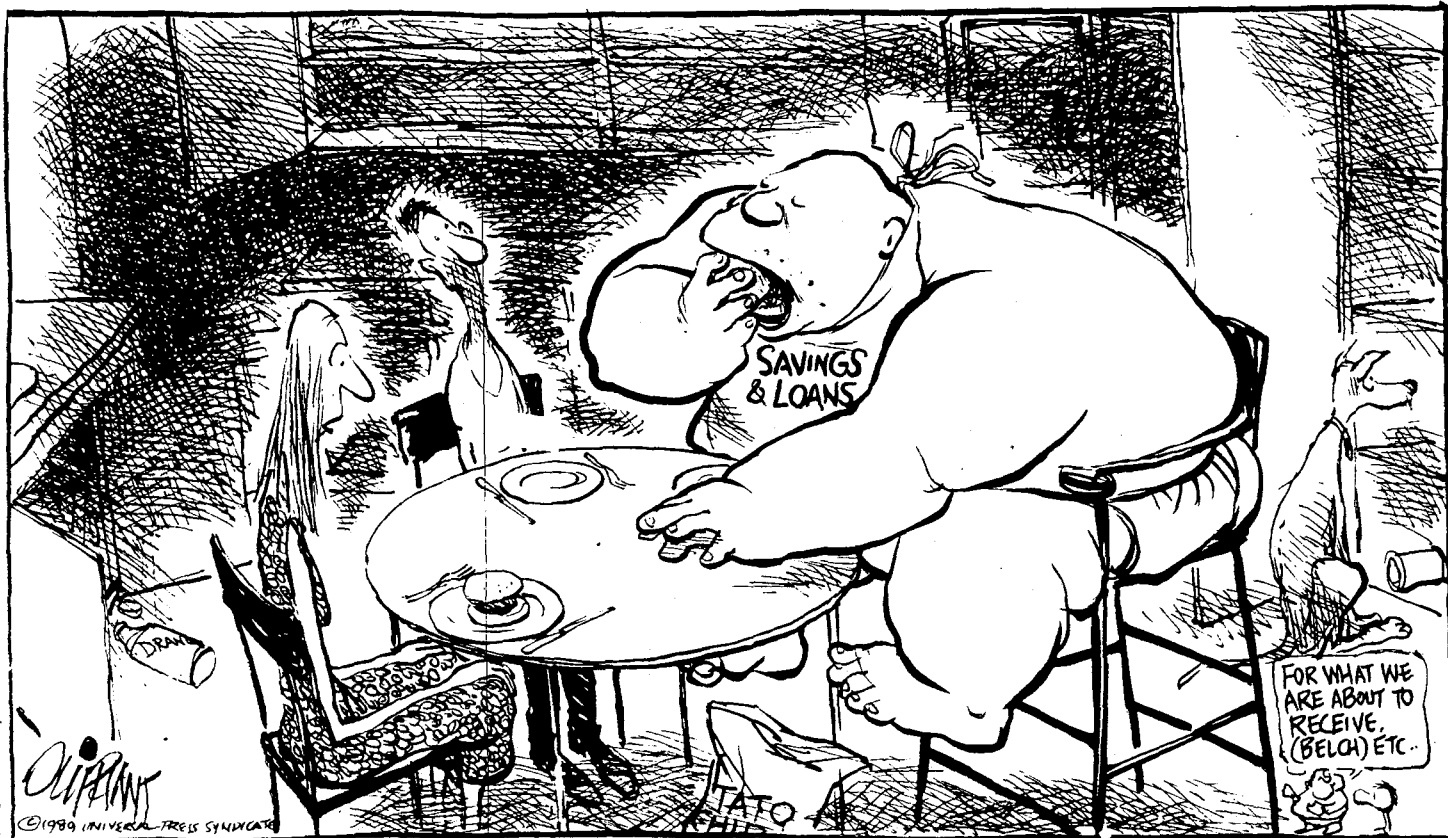
The regulatory authorities' response contained the seeds of worse disasters ahead. To allow the S&Ls to compete with the MMMFs, in 1978 they authorized S&Ls to issue 6-month money market certificates paying rates slightly above the 6-month treasury bill rate. This helped stop disintermediation, but at a price. The S&Ls' cost of obtaining funds, previously kept low by regulation, now began to rise with the money market rates. S&Ls income, however, came from long-term, fixed rate mortgages. Thus, the S&Ls' income rose only slowly as old mortgages were paid off and new ones were made at higher rates, while their costs of funds rose rapidly. This squeeze helped set off the '80s S&L crisis.

The crisis began in two stages. From 1979 to 1982 regulatory changes and actions plus economic recession created hundreds of insolvencies among S&Ls. Then in the mid-'80s, the problem worsened as the economy of the Southwest collapsed.

**A fateful summer:** In the summer of 1979 a decision was made that would have fateful consequences. Under intense pressure to rein in inflation and stabilize the dollar in international currency markets, President Carter named Paul Volcker, the international banking community's choice, to head the Federal Reserve System. In October of that year, Volcker made a radical change in monetary policy. Giving up the past practice of stabilizing interest rates, the Fed sharply contracted the supply of money and credit, driving interest rates up to the highest levels of this century.

By 1981 the prime lending rate had reached 21.5 percent. The high interest rates attracted foreign capital into the country, restoring the international value of the dollar. And, by plunging the economy into the deepest recession since the '30s, it broke the back of the inflation process, as the inflation rate fell below 4 percent in 1982.

The Fed-induced astronomical interest rates hit the S&Ls just as a second government innovation was arriving: financial de-



'PERHAPS WE SHOULD AT LEAST TEACH THE JERK TO SAY GRACE...'



regulation. This development derived from three main sources. Mainstream economists had been pressing for the reduction or elimination of many government regulatory programs for some time, believing that unregulated markets bring superior efficiency and faster growth. Conservative ideologues were arguing that big government was the root of our economic problems. And the big banks lobbied hard for loosening the regulation of financial institutions, which would enable them to gobble up a bigger share of the financial services business.

**A confluence of interests:** This confluence of forces led to the passage of the Depository Institutions Deregulation and Monetary Control Act of 1980 and the followup Garn-St. Germain bill of 1982. These bills phased out interest rate ceilings and allowed S&Ls more leeway to engage in commercial real estate lending and commercial loans, and to invest in risky debt securities. They were allowed to raise funds through expensive "brokered deposits," which are large deposits that brokers place in whatever S&L will pay the highest rates. At the same time, several states, including Texas, California and Florida changed their laws to allow state-chartered S&Ls to invest in a still-wider array of projects, including direct investments in commercial real estate. It was claimed that these changes would enable S&Ls to obtain funds in the current high rate markets and to find uses for those funds that would pay even higher rates.

Deregulation combined with sky-high interest rates meant that the S&Ls' cost of obtaining funds went up and up. In 1980 S&Ls had to pay an average of 8.8 percent for funds, in 1981, 10.9 percent and in 1982, 11.2 percent. While new mortgage rates rose in those years, the S&Ls' inventory of older fixed-rate mortgages kept the average return on mortgages below the cost of funds. For three years the S&Ls were paying more to obtain funds than they were getting from their mortgage loans. The S&Ls lost \$4.6 billion in 1981 and \$4.1 billion in 1982. These losses were so large not just because of the negative rate spread, but also because the severe recession of 1981-82—largely due to the same Fed-induced high interest rates—caused many loan defaults.

The huge losses of 1981-82 weakened nearly all S&Ls, and some became insolvent. Only 17 S&Ls were insolvent in 1980, but the number rose to 65 in 1981 and 201 in 1982. The assets of insolvent S&Ls grew from \$127 million in 1980 to \$49 billion two years later. By 1982 institutions having net worth at the dangerous level of 3 percent of assets or less held 36.9 percent of all S&L assets. The S&L crisis had arrived.

**Regulatory response to the crisis:** In 1980-82 the FSLIC faced a crisis as its own insurance reserve fund was drawn down by the need to close or subsidize the acquisition of many insolvent S&Ls. In 1982 the FSLIC had to spend \$2.4 billion to close or merge ailing S&Ls. The FSLIC insurance reserves, built up from mandatory S&L payments, dwindled from about one percent of insured S&L assets in 1980 to three-quarters of one percent in 1983. (As the crisis worsened, the insurance reserve disappeared. The FSLIC itself became insolvent in 1986.)

The regulatory authorities responded with short-sighted measures to reduce pressure on the S&Ls. Accounting standards were eased to permit S&Ls to look

healthier than they actually were. The minimum required net worth for S&Ls was reduced from 5 percent of assets to 3 percent during 1980-82. Conversion from the mutual form to stock corporations was encouraged as a way to raise additional net worth capital, and by 1984 a majority of S&L assets were held by corporate S&Ls. Regulatory authorities supported the legislative easing of restrictions on S&L loans and investments. All of these actions made the problem grow worse over time.

But most disastrous was the regulatory authorities' decision to stop closing insolvent S&Ls. Realizing that the FSLIC insurance reserve was inadequate to continue closing the growing number of insolvencies, the authorities simply stopped closing most of them. It was hoped that the greater freedom of action possessed by the deregulated S&Ls would enable them to work their way back to solvency. After 1982 the number of closings and other interventions dropped sharply, while the number of insolvencies kept growing.

As insolvent S&Ls began to realize that they were not likely to be closed in the immediate future, a perverse process set in. The owners of insolvent S&Ls, having already lost their capital investment, had nothing to lose from adopting a strategy of rapid expansion by obtaining high-cost funds and investing them in risky but potentially high-yielding loans and investments. It was a "heads I win, tails you lose" strategy. If the risky investments succeeded, the S&L would return to solvency, and the owners would reap a big profit. If they failed, the FSLIC would have to bail out the depositors, and the owners would be no worse off.

Some long-established S&Ls embarked on risky expansion programs. And sharp operators, particularly in Texas and California, saw big opportunities in this situation. They moved in to buy insolvent S&Ls, which could be purchased cheaply if they were stock associations, gaining the opportunity to use federally insured deposit money for speculative investments. Even many financially healthy S&Ls were swept up in this speculative fever. The original mission of S&Ls was forgotten as the share of S&L assets put into home mortgages fell from nearly 60 percent in the early '70s to 40 percent in 1984 and 30 percent in 1988. The percentage of all residential mortgage funds provided by S&Ls fell from 44.6 percent in 1977 to 26.9 percent in 1987.

In Texas and the rest of the Southwest, S&Ls poured funds into risky commercial real estate development. It seemed a good bet in the early '80s, after the second big oil price hike in 1979 pumped prosperity into the oil region. But when oil prices fell from 1984 to 1986, the Southwestern economies fell with them, causing real estate markets to collapse. The high-flying S&Ls lost their gamble. The "tails you lose" side came up, with the "you" being the FSLIC, and ultimately the taxpayers.

**The costs of delay:** The long delay in dealing with the mounting S&L crisis greatly increased its magnitude. If an initially healthy S&L begins to lose money, its net worth (assets less liabilities) declines. If the regulatory authorities had perfect timing and could close the institution at the moment its net worth hit zero, there would be no costs apart from some administrative ones. With zero net worth, the proceeds from the sale of the assets would just cover the debts of the S&L, including the depositors' claims.

The S&L crisis grew so large because the FHLBB failed to promptly close or merge insolvent institutions. After the FSLIC itself became bankrupt, the regulatory authorities delayed going to Congress for additional funds. By knowingly allowing insolvent institutions to stay open, they greatly increased the cost of resolving the crisis as most of the insolvent S&Ls kept losing money. Not until August 1988 did the authorities aggressively move to close or merge the insolvent S&Ls.

The Reagan administration didn't want to stir up this hornet's nest out of fear of hurting Bush's election chances. For some reason the Dukakis campaign failed to make it an issue. A realistic bill to finance a complete resolution of the crisis was not introduced until February of this year. Representative Charles Schumer (D-NY) of the House Banking Committee estimates that every day of delay adds \$30 million to the eventual taxpayer cost as S&L losses continue to mount.

**A crooked mile:** Theft and fraud by S&L officials also played a role in the crisis. The Federal Deposit Insurance Corporation recently announced finding criminal activity at almost half of 220 insolvent S&Ls that it investigated. FHLBB officials last year claimed that evidence of fraud or criminal conduct was found at 75 percent of the insolvent S&Ls.

Deregulation and the absence of effective oversight explain why criminal activity became widespread. Starting pay for FHLBB examiners averaged about \$14,000 in the early '80s, far less than for commercial bank examiners. This produced a high turnover of examiners. And pleas for more funds to hire more examiners as the crisis developed went unheeded by the Office of Management and Budget. As S&L executives at pressured institutions realized how lax the oversight was, the temptation to skirt the law became overpowering in many cases.

Clearly, public regulation and unbridled competition are a dangerous combination. No major nation leaves the provision of financial services to the unregulated market. There were sound reasons for creating a strong public regulatory system for the S&Ls in the '30s. The safeguarding of people's hard-earned savings cannot be left to unregulated, profit-seeking institutions.

On the other side of the ledger, the flow of financial resources into the production and purchase of housing cannot be left to the market. If society is to assure everyone a decent home, publicly regulated institutions must see to it that funds are made available for this purpose at an affordable cost. The S&L industry, in its days of full regulation, made some progress toward accomplishing these objectives, providing a safe repository for savings and placing them in home mortgages.

The '80s financial deregulation was based on the premise that competition and profit maximization is the best way to organize the financial sector. Warnings that competition and profit-seeking produce risks and failures were brushed aside. While investors in ordinary businesses may be willing to risk loss of their investment, people who place their savings in the local S&L do not want to risk their loss. This requires federal insurance. But telling the S&Ls to compete and go for maximum profits means they must risk the depositors' funds. And with the depositors' claims backed by the government, a distorted incentive structure is created that pushes the S&L owners to take

excessive risks, knowing that failure will bring a federal bailout.

Many factors contributed to the size of the S&L collapse. But the fundamental problem was the misguided attempt to mix competition with public regulation. The outcome of this mixture is captured by the convenient availability of automatic teller machines, introduced rapidly due to the spur of competition—but that same spur of competition has wiped out billions of dollars of funds that depositors would now be unable to withdraw, automatically or otherwise, were it not for the federal insurance guarantee.

**Where did the money go?** The \$157.6 billion estimate of the bailout cost includes, in addition to interest payments, \$135 billion in direct bailout costs. That represents the difference between depositors' federally insured claims and what the government thinks it can extract from the assets of the problem S&Ls, either by selling off assets or arranging subsidized mergers. Where did the missing \$135 billion go?

There are four main places the money went. First, some went to line the pockets of thieves. Some S&L officials illegally used company resources for personal consumption. For example, a lawsuit charged that Vernon Savings and Loan of Texas bought a \$2 million California beach house for its chief executive, Don R. Dixon, and paid for furnishings and living expenses of \$800,000 a year, including \$36,780 for flowers. Other S&Ls made big loans to associates of the officers with no expectation of being repaid. While the individuals responsible for such criminal activity can be prosecuted, the misappropriated funds generally are unreachable since they have long since been spent for luxury consumption.

Second, the money went to finance failed commercial construction projects. All over the Southwest stand shopping malls and other commercial developments that went bankrupt with the oil bust.

Third, money was lost through speculation of various forms. Some S&Ls bought and sold real estate and securities, hoping to make a profit. Instead of buying cheap and selling dear, most did the reverse. The money went to other market participants who succeeded.

The fourth place the money went involves a more subtle process. The initial blow to the S&Ls was struck by Federal Reserve Chairman Paul Volcker when the Fed raised interest rates through the ceiling from 1979 to 1981. Indeed, interest rates have remained very high by historical standards ever since. These high interest rates imposed huge losses on the S&Ls from 1980 to 1982, eroding their net worth and pushing hundreds into insolvency.

This process caused a major redistribution of income in the U.S. Between 1972 and 1982 the share of interest income in total national income doubled from 5.4 percent to 10.8 percent. This represented an enormous transfer of income from the great majority to the small part of the population that has substantial net financial assets. Those who put money into S&Ls in those years in large denomination, high-yielding money market certificates, brokered deposits and so forth received a rate of return far above what homeowners were paying on their mortgages, thus siphoning off the S&Ls' net worth. Hence, part of the money lost went to wealthy moneylenders, thanks to the Fed's high interest rate policy. ■





## The new homeless: America's drifting corporations

By Milton Moskowitz

**T**HERE'S NOTHING LIKE YOUR OWN HOMETOWN. No matter where you may end up living, the place where you were born and/or grew up will always have a special meaning for you—and it's that way for many companies too. Ford Motor Company is headquartered in Dearborn, Mich., 10 miles outside Detroit, because that's where Henry Ford was born and grew up. Hershey is located in Pennsylvania Dutch country, 30 miles from Lancaster, because that's where Milton Hershey was born and grew up. And Levi Strauss is

headquartered in San Francisco, not far from the dock where Levi Strauss arrived in 1850.

Of course it's more difficult for conglomerates to have this sense of roots. Being a hodgepodge of different entities, they can have many hometowns. Consider, for example, RJR Nabisco, which recently went private in a \$25 billion leveraged buyout engineered by Kohlberg Kravis Roberts (KKR). **Tobacco roots:** The main engine of RJR Nabisco is R.J. Reynolds Tobacco, the nation's second-largest purveyor of cigarettes. Reynolds has an association that goes

back more than 100 years with the principal tobacco-growing state, North Carolina. In fact, it took two of its major brand names from its headquarters city, Winston-Salem.

Richard Joshua Reynolds, the founder of the company bearing his name, used to foster the legend that he first rode into the twin hamlets of Winston and Salem in the Piedmont region of North Carolina as an illiterate, barefoot farm boy atop a wagon load of his dad's tobacco. To visit Winston-Salem is to be overwhelmed by the tobacco culture that permeates the region. And Reynolds has been a central fixture in that culture throughout this century. The 22-story Reynolds Building that went up in Winston-Salem in 1929 was then the largest building south of Baltimore. It was also the model for the Empire State Building, which went up in New York in 1931. The same architect, William Lamb, designed both structures.

R.J. Reynolds became one of the largest contributors to independent colleges and universities, especially those in the South. In 1956 it was instrumental in having Wake Forest University relocate from Wake County, N.C., to Winston-Salem. During the '60s, when many cities—including Winston-Salem—were racked by riots, Reynolds put up \$1 million to fund the establishment of a Winston-Salem citizens' coalition to improve housing and public transportation.

After research linking smoking to lung cancer was accepted by the U.S. Surgeon General in 1964, Reynolds, flush with profits from cigarettes, diversified into foods, wine and liquor, container shipping and oil exploration. One of the biggest acquisitions, in 1979, was San Francisco's Del Monte. And once it became part of Reynolds, Del Monte was never again to play the role it once did in its hometown. The shots were being called from Winston-Salem.

In 1985 Reynolds—by now called R.J. Reynolds Industries—pulled off its biggest acquisition, absorbing Nabisco Brands, itself the result of a 1981 marriage that united Nabisco (Ritz crackers, Geritol, Oreo cookies, Wheat Thins, Shredded Wheat) with Standard Brands (Planters nuts, Fleischmann's margarine, Blue Bonnet margarine, Royal puddings). The company changed its name to RJR Nabisco—but the headquarters remained in Winston-Salem.

**Corporate weaning:** The unthinkable—to Winston-Salem—happened in 1987 when RJR Nabisco decided to get out from under this tobacco wrap and move the headquarters of the corporation to Atlanta. It made sense, they said, to have RJR Nabisco "assume the role of a holding company, a separate parent company." And of course parents don't live with their children anymore. Besides, in moving to Atlanta, at least they weren't deserting the South.

However, now that RJR Nabisco has become a ward of KKR, taking on a mountain of debt to finance the buyout of the public shareholders, the corporate address is going to change again. Strike Atlanta from the letterhead and substitute New York City or a suburb of New York. The new headquarters will definitely be in the New York area. It's not certain yet how many of the 450 Atlanta headquarters people will be making this move. RJR Nabisco is in a cost-cutting mood—and layoffs are expected.

Hardly anyone moves anymore from Atlanta to New York. But of course this move has a certain amount of logic to it. First of all, the new chairman and chief executive of RJR Nabisco is Louis Gerstner Jr., formerly president of American Express. Gerstner lives in Greenwich, Conn. This way he won't have to pull up stakes and look for a condo in Atlanta. But a more important reason is the highly leveraged position of RJR Nabisco. It has something like \$23 billion of debt on its books—and the pieces of paper representing this debt were bought and sold by New York investment bankers. When you owe so much money, it's a good idea to keep in close touch with the people who lent it to you. Gerstner had a euphemistic way of putting it:

"The objectives of our parent company can best be achieved by maintaining close, ongoing contact with the investment banking community and other New York-based segments of the business community."

So forget about Camel cigarettes and Oreo cookies and Del Monte fruit cocktail and the plant communities where these products are turned out. We're talking about important money here. That's priority No. 1. RJR Nabisco's new hometown, fittingly, is Wall Street.

**Milton Moskowitz** has published widely on business and corporate affairs.

### THE DECLINE OF SOCIALISM IN AMERICA

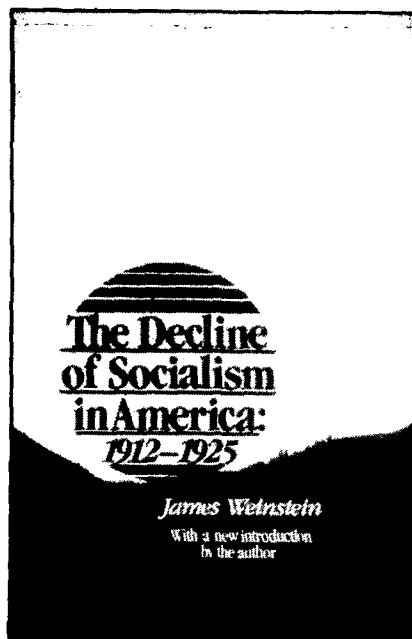
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## Rich law, poor law: who did the abortion decision really hurt?

"On July 2, Americans lost a fundamental liberty," exclaimed the full-page advertisement in the *New York Times* last month, taken out by the National Abortion Rights Action League (NARAL). The text continued, "The Supreme Court's ruling in *Webster vs. Reproductive Health Services* has given politicians the power to intrude in the most personal decision an American can make—whether or not to have an abortion."

This line of argument—reflective of the general response by pro-choice forces to the court's decision—was fine as propaganda but, from the perspective of the average white, upscale *Times* reader, absolute nonsense. As Justice Harry Blackmun wrote in his vigorous dissent, the court decided the case "without making a single, even incremental change in the law of abortion."

Blackmun's gloomy prediction for the future of abortion rights certainly justifies the all-out campaign by women's groups and others to defend these rights. But what the decision underlines is that Americans—at least some Americans—lost the reality of this fundamental right long ago, in 1977.

What does the *Webster* case, decided a month ago by the Supreme Court, do? It allows Missouri (therefore state governments everywhere) to prohibit the use of public hospitals, and other facilities supported by public money, for the performance of "non-therapeutic" abortions—i.e., those not necessary to save the woman's life. It sustains Missouri's right to prohibit public employees from participating in the performance of abortions, and it upholds a Missouri law requiring doctors to perform a battery of tests after 20 weeks to determine whether the fetus could live outside the womb.

Women looking for an abortion after 20 weeks of pregnancy are likely to be young or poor or both—procrastinating out of denial, lack of money and ignorance. An abortion after 20 weeks costs about \$800, on top of which the tests cost another \$250—thus making an abortion an impossibly expensive recourse for the young and the poor.

This was not the first time the court's decision penalized the poor. The crucial decision for many women came 12 years ago.

Back in 1977 the court decided, by a vote of 5 to 3, that states have no constitutional obligation to pay for "non-therapeutic" abortions. Three years later, in *Harris vs. McRae*, it ruled that neither the federal government nor the states were required to pay for medically unnecessary abortions for women on welfare.

In writing his dim and convoluted decision in the *Webster* case, Chief Justice William Rehnquist cited *McRae* as precedent for the latest action upholding the prohibition on Missouri's public hospitals, publicly financed facilities and public employees from performing or assisting in "non-therapeutic" abortions. He furthermore reiterated the court's position from another earlier case that "the due process clauses generally confer no affirmative right to governmental aid, even where such aid may be necessary to secure life, liberty or property interests of which the government itself may not deprive the individual." Questions of prospective threat aside, what the "Reagan" court

has now done is not substantially different from what its predecessors did—protecting the general right to abortion while placing obstacles in the way of the poor who seek to exercise that right.

The women's movement has vowed to create a storm across the country in defense of abortion rights. Pro-choice people who in the past voted their conservative economic interest, never expecting that anything could unhinge *Roe vs. Wade*, are having second thoughts. The cautiously liberal National Organization for Women (NOW) is planning to launch nationwide caravans molded on the civil rights movement's freedom rides, and to hold demonstrations that violate the law. Women who have never attended a protest march in their lives are traveling to distant cities and filling the streets in their own towns.

One hopes that the failures of the late '70s will be remembered: a lot of middle-class women's organizations insufficiently contested the assaults of the court and government on poor women, particularly poor minority women, and did not publicly link as twin assaults on poor women a cutoff of funds for Medicaid abortions with a simultaneous eagerness on the part of the Carter administration to fund Medicaid sterilizations.

Indeed, the not-so-concealed theme of some major figures in NARAL and NOW was that abortion should be legal because the most prolific breeders were welfare mothers from the dangerous classes. Next stop, eugenics. The founding chairman of NARAL was Lawrence Lader, who was also on the board of NOW and of the Association for Voluntary Sterilization. He is the author of *Breeding Ourselves to Death* and has written, "One third of all children on welfare today come from neglected homes, ignored and unwanted by either parent.... Above all, society must grasp the grim relationship between unwanted children and the violent rebellion of minority groups."

The leader of NARAL in New York lobbied against the provisions to protect poor minority women from involuntary steriliza-

tion, and so did Planned Parenthood. NARAL testified that since abortion funding had already been restricted for the poor, it would be cruel to restrict their access to sterilization. The whole history of liberalism over the last 15 years is told in this story.

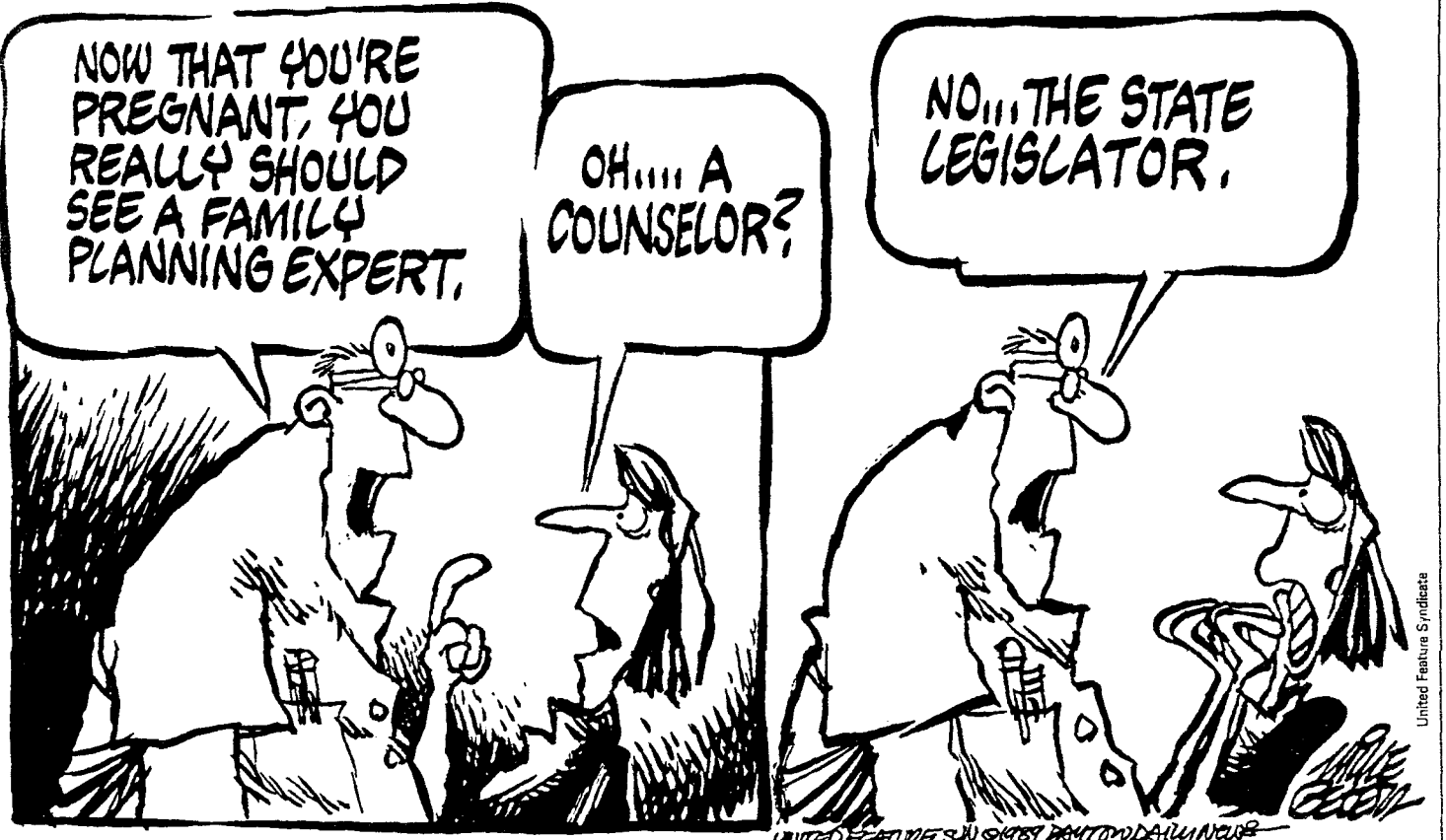
Maybe now pro-choice forces will stop

fighting defensive wars and try to capture ground from the enemy, remembering as they do so that class is a reality in this country as elsewhere, and that successful campaigns make broad alliances and don't just see the issues through the optic of the middle class.

Distributed by the L.A. Weekly

## ASHES & DIAMONDS

By Alexander Cockburn



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By John R. MacArthur

I.F. STONE AND HOWARD SIMONS, TWO of the most accomplished journalists of the older generation, died within a few days of one another in June, leaving their trade much impoverished.

Of the two, I most admired Stone, who epitomized the reporter as outsider. I always thought of him as an old-fashioned solo practitioner, the prototypical muckraker who would sooner go to jail than hold back on a story or fudge the truth to accommodate someone in power.

Simons was a more conventional sort of newsman. He made it big on a big-time newspaper, rising to man-

## JOURNALISM

aging editor of the *Washington Post*—where he organized and encouraged much of the paper's Watergate coverage. He ended his career immured in the establishment as curator of Harvard's prestigious Neiman Foundation.

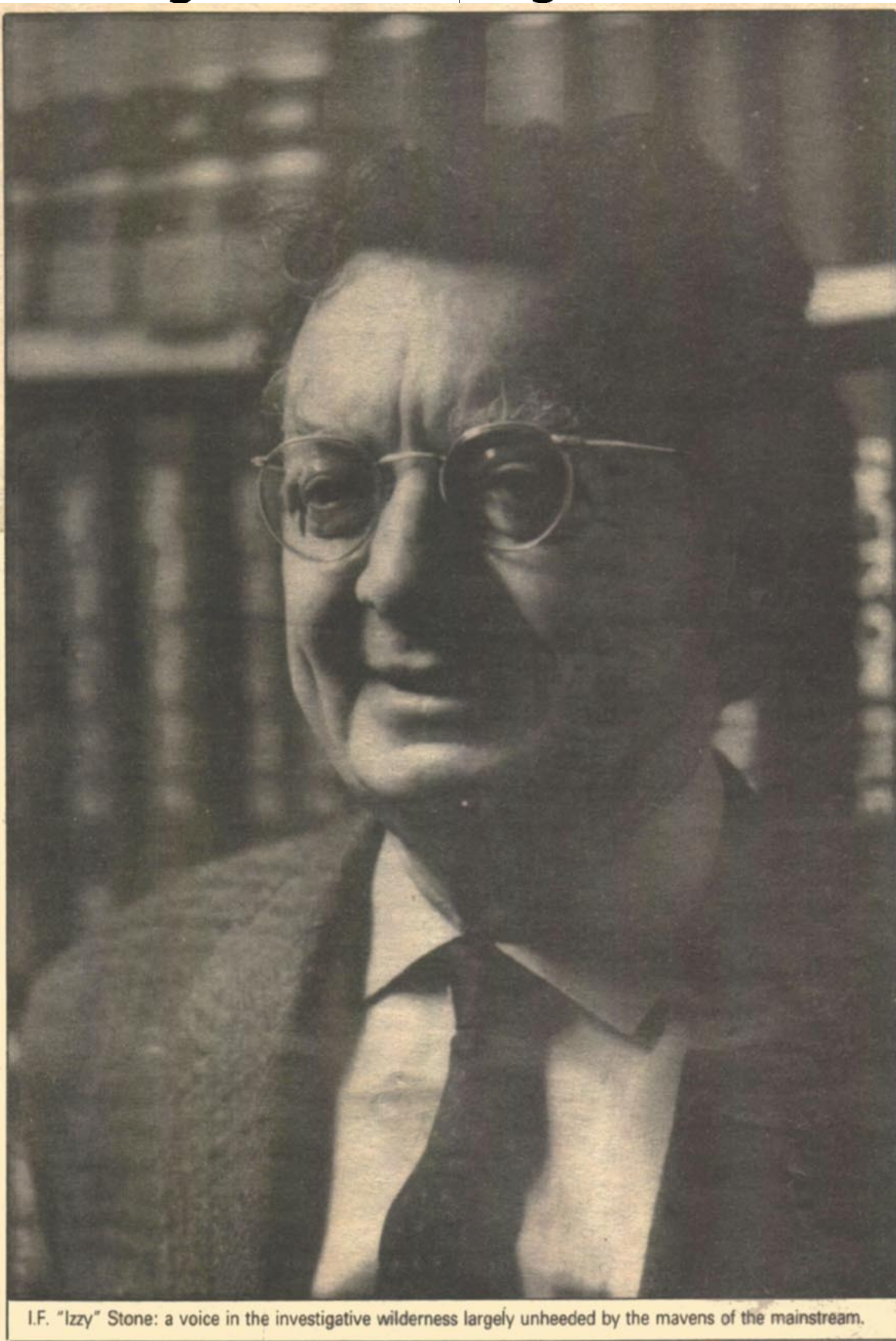
**Simons and Stone, unturned:** Some of Stone's devotees probably would take umbrage at a comparison between their hero and one so orthodox as Simons. Simons' admirers also might think their man slighted by such a parallel.

But I think both men saw their jobs from more or less the same point of view, the one that takes seriously Mr. Dooley's admonition that it is the business of the journalist to "comfort the afflicted and afflict the comfortable."

So it was with some irony that I read in Simons' obituary that a month before he died he was still asking the rhetorical question: "How could Ollie North have gotten away with it for so long?" Simons knew the answer very well, and so did Stone. Over the last decade of their lives the so-called investigative reporting they practiced fell from fashion, and newspapers, once emboldened by the Vietnam War and Watergate, seemed suddenly to lose interest in the genre. Along with many of my friends and contemporaries who entered the reporting trade in the mid- to late-'70s with a sense of missionary zeal, I was brusquely awakened in the Reagan era to an atmosphere of caution, self-censorship and aggressive government intimidation by the likes of William Casey and Edwin Meese. I heard the idiotic phrase, "The First Amendment is not a hunting license," uttered frequently as an excuse for doing nothing. And in the '80s, after becoming a magazine publisher, I found myself at journalism conferences refuting the absurd charge that reporters were too aggressive, when I knew the contrary was true.

**Getting Jacked around:** Evidence of the media's passivity is embarrassingly apparent as the Reagan administration begins to recede

## Stone and Simons are gone, but it's investigative reporting that is dead



I.F. "Izzy" Stone: a voice in the investigative wilderness largely unheeded by the mavens of the mainstream.

**Stone and Simons knew it was the journalist's job to "comfort the afflicted and afflict the comfortable."**

from memory. What, I wondered, did Stone and Simons think of the Department of Housing and Urban Development scandal making the papers only after Reagan left office? How did they take the news that Dale

Van Atta and Jack Anderson sat on the U.S. Iran arms-for-hostages story for 11 months, even though Van Atta had direct confirmation of the deal from President Reagan? (A Lebanese weekly finally broke the story in November 1986.) What did Simons make of the *Washington Post's* failure to follow up when the Anderson Van Atta column began at last to report—albeit discreetly—some aspects of the administration's conciliatory and hypocritical policy toward Iran?

I do know what Simons thought of the widely reported story of how the Associated Press management—under pressure from the Reagan administration—interfered with the

two investigative reporters who came closest to exposing the contra side of the Iran contra scandal. He told me that the *Washington Post* would never have succumbed to such coercion in his day. But since Simons left the *Post* in 1984 things had evidently changed. In 1986, for example, the paper that stood up to Richard Nixon actually censored itself in the face of Casey's threat to prosecute if it published certain details of the Ronald Pelton spy case.

The truly sad news amid all the tributes to Stone and Simons is the difficulty in locating their legacy or likely successors. More than anything else, their deaths remind us of how far the press has fallen from the

high standards and sense of moral purpose exhibited by both Simons and Stone.

**A nation of hostages:** Today the behavioral norm among reporters is accurately represented by Dale Van Atta, who astonished me recently with the boast that by not breaking the arms-for-hostages story he enjoyed "the best of both worlds"—the continued confidence of his administration sources and an edge on the rest of the Washington press corps. Ultimately, he said, holding the story benefited the nation because it allowed the scandal to worsen.

"A couple of Democratic senators yelled at me for not breaking the story," Van Atta said. "I said you ought to get down on your hands and knees and kiss my feet.... By holding it, it became a much bigger story."

Van Atta and Anderson, of course, have justified their self-censorship by invoking concern for the safety of the hostages held in Lebanon. They accepted the administration's contention that publication of the story might lead to a loss of innocent lives. Perhaps that argument plays for a couple of weeks or months, but not 11 months, and not while an administration is professing to follow an unequivocal policy against "terrorism." Van Atta, in fact, has written that in January 1986 his frustration at his own silence became so great that he "made a stab at leaking what I could not print to another reporter [Ted Koppel] who might. Let him bear the responsibility [for the safety of the hostages]."

It's hard to imagine I.F. Stone and Howard Simons held hostage to such hypocrisy. I wish they were alive to answer Van Atta's question to me: "At what point do you stop a policy?" No doubt they would have explained to him that those decisions are best left to the American people, not news reporters.

And where were Simons and Stone during all this time when we most needed their spirit? After years of being ignored by the establishment media, Stone was on a well-deserved sabbatical, busy revising the conventional wisdom on the trial of Socrates. Simons, one of the heroes of Watergate, was shouldered aside and left the *Post* at 55, an age normally considered to be the prime of a man's professional life.

So the *New York Times* obituaries about Stone and Simons, it seemed to me, were oddly incomplete. They didn't say why Stone never got the credit he deserved or why Simons ended up at a university instead of on a newspaper. But they did, maybe by accident, sum up contemporary journalism's contemptuous attitude toward independence and idealism. Simons was granted "frankness and astringent wit"; Stone was dismissed as a "pamphleteer" and "gadfly." ■

John R. MacArthur is the publisher of *Harper's* magazine.



By Felicia Kornbluh

**C**ONTEXT IS EVERYTHING. CARL Pilgrim Jr. is addressing a crowd of moderate size on the steps of the U.S. Capitol building. "I have a dream," he says hoarsely. "that someday my children will be judged not by the color of their skin but by the content of their character." Carl is 15. His imitation of Martin Luther King Jr. has won him public accolades and a commendation from the Massachusetts state legislature.

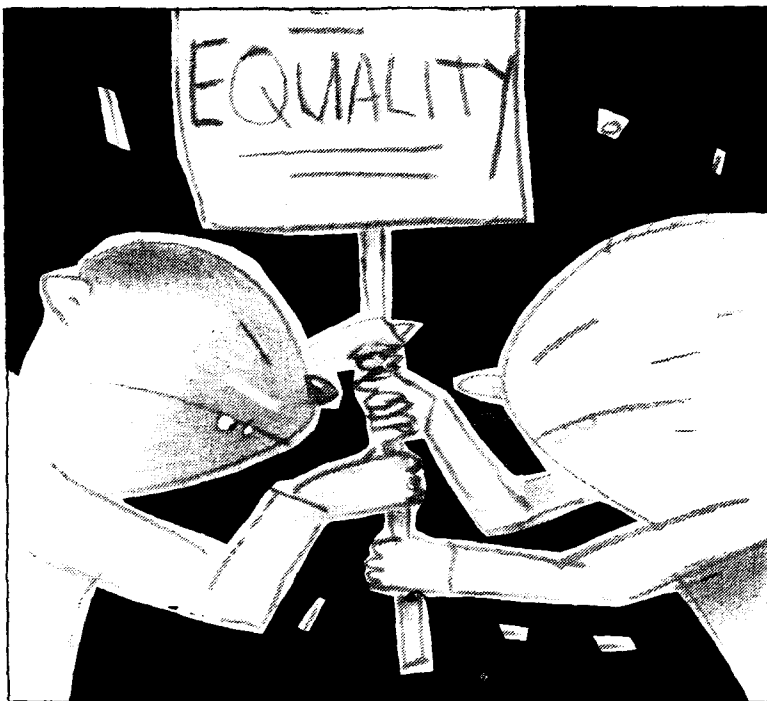
Later the same evening, I stand for the responsive reading during a special Sabbath service in an upscale synagogue on the edge of Washington. "I have a dream," I recite with more than 100 young people, plus present-day civil rights leaders and prominent Washingtonians commemorating the 25th anniversary of Freedom Summer. "that my four little children will one day live in a nation where they will not be judged by the color of their skin but by the content of their character."

The words are the expected—indeed, the inevitable—ones. But the mood at these commemorative events, recalling the deaths of civil rights activists James Chaney, Andrew Goodman and Michael Schwerner, has gone strangely wrong. In what presents itself as a celebration of history, history has been obscured; in a celebration of activism, a young activist has trouble delineating usable lessons or information from a week of involvement; in a celebration of the most grassroots-oriented major civil rights group (SNCC, the Student Nonviolent Coordinating Committee), all of the organizing seems to have been top-down; and in a celebration of biracial and multicultural unity, it seems that everyone hates everyone else.

**Innocent lies:** The lies perpetrated by this caravan to and from Philadelphia, Miss., were more innocent than those perpetrated by the film *Mississippi Burning*, but they were no less severe. As a young person recently graduated from comfortable college radicalism, it was a cold introduction to politics in "the real world."

We left New York at 10 a.m. on June 19, met with "freedom riders" from Philadelphia, and arrived in Birmingham on the 20th. In Birmingham, culture shock and exhilaration: the Sixteenth Street Baptist Church, where four girls were killed by a racist's bomb in 1963, was the first black church I'd seen in the Deep South. I met peeling paint, deep political commitment and irresistible music, including a girl who looked 11 belting out "Sweet Chariot" like a pro. Caravan members were greeted by black officials in the city's new convention center and marched past City Hall without even drawing stares.

But on a smaller stage—the bus where I had been spending most of my time—suspicion and hostility were simmering to a boil. Students



## Taken for a ride by '60s nostalgia

from the City University of New York, who had participated in the upsurge that forced Gov. Mario Cuomo to rescind tuition hikes earlier this year, seemed less interested in coalition-building than in the semantics of race. Were they Africans, African-Americans or Africans born in America? They expressed a need to "save" the high school- and junior high school-aged kids on the trip from miseducation—from believing, for example, that "white men's schools" could ever serve black needs. Mistrust hummed, and the white folks kept quiet as we headed into Meridian, Miss.

June 21 was the 25th anniversary of the murder of Chaney, Goodman and Schwerner by white racists with the help of the Neshoba County police. In Meridian, we visited the graveside of James Chaney, the only one of the three originally from Mississippi. Photographers and television cameras crowded against mourners, politicians and caravan members for space at the grave. I sat down to interview James Farmer, the former executive director of the Congress of Racial Equality and one of the few civil rights activists included in the commemorative. By the time I realized that I was sitting on his blind side, the clacking cameras and supermicrophones had surrounded us. Then we all—mourners, cameras et al.—moved on to a memorial service in Philadelphia.

Gov. Ray Mabus of Mississippi and Mayor Wilson Goode of Philadelphia, Pa., spoke with insincere pride about the progress in U.S. race relations over 25 years. A chorus sang "Oh, Freedom" and the Mozart *Requiem* and recited the Mourner's Kaddish in Hebrew. Local whites were almost completely invisible at this, as at all the memorial events. The black locals who attended—those who could get away in the middle of a workday—said that little had

changed. Above all else, it was a media event. Cameras held a prominent place. Everyone was bathed in a sea of political rhetoric that caravan participants, local teenagers and even the head of the New York Civil Liberties Union recognized as hollow.

**Mandatory fun:** Then it was time for "fun": catfish, hush puppies and Pepsi (with no mention of the company's involvement in South Africa) to a light background of speeches and music. I was served by a blond teenager wearing a cap that read, "I [heart] a Southern Belle"; many joked about "Southern hospitality." Myrlie Evers, the widow of Medgar Evers (who was gunned down in 1963, and for whom there was no comparable commemorative effort) spoke to a barely attentive crowd. I joined hands with a white Southern family on my left and a black Southern family on my right for the ritualized singing of "We Shall Overcome." Under an open country sky, I almost believed it.

The last leg of our trip was a "reverse freedom ride," from South to North, with stops in Washington, D.C., and New York. Participants from Los Angeles, Calif., and Jackson and Philadelphia, Miss., joined the caravan. Again, expressions of unity and shared political purpose clashed farcically, or tragically, with incidents of confrontation. On my bus, Marcel, a student leader from the City College of New York, wearing dashiki robes and speaking in a crisp Haitian accent, shared with the group his sense of inevitable misunderstanding between "Africans" and "Europeans." He "explained" that the Jews, who control New York City, had sold Africans into slavery in ancient times and had owned 90 percent of the property in Germany in the '20s and '30s. Veberly, who had been with the Black Panthers in Oakland when Bobby Seale was arrested,

added that the Jews *must* have been powerful, or else Hitler would not have found it necessary to kill them.

Livingston, a student leader from the John Jay Institute for Criminal Justice, told us all that he was as mistrustful of integration as of Southern segregation. "I don't want

### RACE

to go to your schools; I don't want to live in your neighborhoods." And so forth. Fourteen-year-old Earl faced alternating denunciations and condescension for saying that he felt as comfortable with white as with black people. Sixteen-year-old Danielle told me that she had been accused by the older black students of two crimes: cutting her hair like a white person and speaking "white" English.

**Losing their cool:** Helen James, who has been active in the civil rights movement since 1944 and was sent on the caravan by her union (Social Service Employees Union), yelled at the students from her spot in the front of the bus. I became the representative of white, Jewish and left-wing opinion. But my multiple identities only confused people like Livingston, who claimed that the label "African" explained everything about his political and ethical orientation. I lost my cool: "The Jews never owned 90 percent of anything I've ever heard of," I shouted, while also trying to assuage: "If you want to talk about property ownership and the exploitation of labor, then let's talk about that."

Washington offered more rhetoric—not bad rhetoric, but, as in Mississippi, out of touch with the real, tangled complexity of the issues. Representatives of Human SERVE's "100% Vote" campaign, the Rainbow Coalition (including Jesse Jackson Jr.) and the civil rights movement encouraged a small audience to "rekindle the light" of activism and fight the Supreme Court.

### On this Freedom Summer 25th anniversary trek, expressions of unity and shared political purpose clashed farcically, or tragically, with incidents of confrontation.

Rita Schwerner Bender, the widow of Michael Schwerner, told the crowd (and omnipotent cameras) about a meeting between members of the families of the slain activists and President Bush in which she pushed Bush's "1000 Points of Light" mythology to its logical conclusion: she suggested that he open his vacation home in Kennebunkport, Maine,

to a homeless family.

**Overcome by the hype:** Some caravan members carried signs that countered the self-congratulatory tone of the event. The signs read: "Change??" and "Registered Voters Need Qualified Candidates." Against the background of Marcel's and Veberly's comments about the Jews, the evening's ceremonies at the Washington Hebrew Congregation—which looked more like the Kennedy Center than like the scorched Baptist places we had seen in the South—were little better than ridiculous. "I have a dream.... We Shall Overcome." Right.

By the time we reached New York, it was clear to all the caravan participants that we had become, in Danielle's words, "cardboard cut-outs" to be unpacked at each event and to clap on cue. Returning to the ever-progressive Cathedral of St. John the Divine on the Upper West Side of Manhattan, fed-up caravan participants chanted, "The people united will never be defeated!" during a speech by Mayor Ed Koch. Then we performed our only activist gesture of the five days, a staged toe-dip into voter registration. But on the way to sign up voters in East Harlem, 19-year-old Julie Horowitz was surrounded by young black women who called her a "European" and "Caucazoid" and told her that she would always be a racist (but that, they never would or could be so). Blacks and Jews were at each other's throats (always in control, I told the women that their understanding of racism was "a crock of shit") even as we ascended into the cavernous cathedral for a final commemorative event.

Once more, context was all-telling. The luminaries ranged from Pete Seeger to Robert Kennedy Jr. to Maya Angelou and included a handicapped rap musician named "Kid Finesse." Their words soothed and occasionally inspired but finally rang hollow. Ossie Davis and Ruby Dee recited a brief history of the civil rights movement; they included many more heroes and victims than Chaney, Goodman and Schwerner—and thus corrected at least one piece of the mythology that the commemorative week had been writing—but they stopped with the murder of Martin Luther King Jr.

As in Birmingham, Mississippi and Washington, our celebration of the past was contradicted by the bitter directionlessness of the present. And it was mocked by the distortion of a history on which the commemorative supposedly placed the highest value. Young people on the caravan learned that it was not enough to hear celebrities recite the poetry of the past, and that an incantation was not equivalent to a social movement. Perhaps it will also be the beginning of creating a poetry that this generation can call its own. ■

Felicia Kornbluh is co-editor of *Extra!*, the newsletter of Fairness and Accuracy in Reporting.

IN THESE TIMES AUGUST 2-29, 1989 25



## Mary Shelley: Romance and Reality

By Emily W. Sunstein  
Little Brown, 478 pp., \$24.95

By Marlene Nadle

**E**MILY SUNSTEIN'S BIOGRAPHY gives Mary Wollstonecraft Shelley the place denied her as one of the major literary figures of the 19th century romantic age and as an appropriate heroine for the contemporary women's movement.

She reasserts the originality that enabled Shelley to write *Franken-*

## LITERATURE

*stein* at 19 and invent science fiction. In *The Last Man* Shelley wrote the first futuristic catastrophe novel that showed the end of the world by an airborne death, anticipating our nuclear age. She invented the mode of literary criticism that has since become standard—relating the work to the life of the author (as she first did when editing the collected poetry of her husband, Percy Bysshe Shelley). Sunstein also argues that Shelley is indeed her mother's daughter, true heir to pioneer feminist Mary Wollstonecraft's principles of intellectual and sexual freedom for women, as well as to a full measure of society's punishment for them.

Using Shelley's journals, workbooks, unpublished letters and correspondence, Sunstein rescues Mary Shelley from the image created by her descendants, who sentimentalized her legend, and a rejected suitor, who brutalized it. Her admirers and traducers turned her into a conventional, bourgeois woman who only wanted respectable domesticity, was opposed to her husband's radical views and was indifferently edu-



Mary Shelley: a monster of a talent constrained by society gets her due in a new biography.

## A buried body of work gets new life

cated and intellectually mediocre. **Unexpected surprise:** Sunstein shared much of that view when she began, seeing Shelley as a mere satellite to her husband, and thought to present her as the conservative daughter of a radical mother. The biography turned into a revisionist work because, after two years of research, Sunstein simply did not find the person she expected.

The Mary Shelley she discovered had aspirations that were even more exceptional for a woman born in

1797 than they are for women today. As Shelley wrote with pride, "I was nursed and fed with a love of glory. To be something great and good was the precept given me." She was an overachiever who published her first writing at 10.

She was a scholar who learned her revolutionary beliefs in justice and liberty—as well as her lessons in history, mythology and literature—from her father, the educator and philosopher William Godwin. She was a youthful rebel against her

stepmother (Wollstonecraft died giving birth to Mary) and against her whole family. At 16 she ran away to live with the 21-year-old Shelley, the unhappily married heir to a baronetcy. In so doing, she believed she was following her mother's written message to her to pursue happiness while young and to claim sexual fulfillment as one of the rights of women.

In her life with Shelley there was both sexual and intellectual passion. Yet, Sunstein argues, it was Mary rather than the erratic, then unknown Shelley who brought the discipline to their artistic life through her already established habit of morning writing. She, carrying on the pattern begun with her father, largely initiated their shared study of languages and literature and recorded their progress in her journal.

**Spirit of the times:** It was during this time when the poet Byron was visiting that, in a contest for the best ghost story, she beat both poets and produced the modern myth *Frankenstein*. This idyllic life was marred by the suicide of Percy Shelley's abandoned wife, the death of Mary Shelley's two children and, finally, the death by drowning of her husband, leaving her at 24 a penniless widow with a two-year-old son.

It is in her remaining 29 years that Mary Shelley seems most contemporary in her struggle to support her family as a professional woman of letters, in her fight against society's opposition and ostracism, in her internal battle between her ambition and self-doubt, in all her worries about money, loneliness and the lack of men in her life. Despite these burdens, she produced her edition of Percy Shelley's poetry, five more novels, literary biographies and travel books, plus a constant stream of stories, essays, reviews and poems.

In all her works her heroes and

heroines are those who confront custom, power and unjust authority. In her politics she welcomed the revolutions and reforms of the 1830s and was financially supporting the Italian liberation movement even near the end of her life.

Sunstein, who is amazed at the person she found, wonders why, given the odds against her, Shelley did not become a burnt-out case. The question the book cannot answer is what more Shelley might have accomplished if she and her work had been nurtured and encouraged. It is a question she asked herself and answered bitterly, saying she might have "become something" if someone she looked up to had recruited, pushed and supported her.

If she had been a man, her earlier sexual liaison wouldn't have kept her out of intellectual circles where valuable contacts were made, or away from the stimulation needed for good work. Even the leading feminists did not support her because of the prudery of the times, and, when introduced, Lucy Aikin turned her back on Shelley. In addition to ostracism because of her sexual past, she had the usual disadvantage of being an intellectual woman. One friend asked her, "Does it not provoke you how vain the gift of genius is for women? How so far from binding her more closely to the admiration and love of her fellow creatures, it does in effect create that gulf across which no one passes."

Few stood by her as she stood by a long list of women who were victims of the social system. And few have done as well as Emily Sunstein does in her breakthrough biography that unwraps the myth of Mary Shelley as a gray, domestic wren and reveals her as the daring, gifted original she was.

Marlene Nadle is a writer living in New York.

## NOTEBOOK

### The Temple of My Familiar

by Alice Walker  
Harcourt Brace Jovanovich  
416 pp., \$19.95

Alice Walker's latest novel, *The Temple of My Familiar*, appears like soothing syrup amidst the violent and cynical daily news. Stuck between the book's covers is a world in which people can find physical and spiritual health just by searching for it, a world filled with health foods, massages, uplifting rock'n'roll and lovely long voyages, which lead to wholeness and self-understanding.

Walker's book is warm and cuddly, a comforting companion in troubled times. But like a cheap teddy bear, it comes apart at the seams, rarely upholding Walker's reputation for powerful writing. This time, she's written

a long and sometimes tedious Message. It's not a bad message: Walker describes how people can heal themselves after physical or emotional battering and ultimately protect themselves from the passionless times in which we live.

*The Temple of My Familiar* is the story of three couples: Arveyda, a holistic rock star, and his wife Carlotta, a Central American refugee; Celie's granddaughter Fanny, an academic-turned-masseuse, and her husband Suwelo, a disillusioned academic; and finally Miss Lissie and Mr. Hal, an elderly couple who knew Suwelo's uncle.

Walker weaves together the lives of these six people, also throwing in a few favorite characters from *The Color Purple*. This book's characters are an update on those. Now they live mainly

in California, follow New Age philosophy and seem to believe that they can grasp all the healing powers in the universe if they just look hard enough.

Long on inspiration and short on narrative tension, the book's didactic tone cuts into the story's potential strength. At times the characters seem just cardboard fronts for Walker's sermon. In her previous books, particularly *The Color Purple* and *Meridian*, Walker painted profound images of African-American life in America's South. The heat, the smells, pains and passions were all there, in full and terrifying color. But with *The Temple of My Familiar* Walker has pushed a damp cloth across the landscape of her story, covering a worthy tale with bland prose.

—Maggie Garb





## De Palma's Grenade Guignol

**Casualties of War**  
Directed by Brian De Palma

By Pat Aufderheide

**B**RIAN DE PALMA'S *CASUALTIES OF WAR* tackles a subject once too hot for the movies: American atrocities in Vietnam. In the hands of the man who described himself to *Vanity Fair* as "a combination of grand opera and Grand Guignol," it comes out as something more than a TV movie-of-the-week, and something less than a pulp horror film. The movie walks a wobbly line between exploitation and moralizing.

Drawn from a true incident, it's the story of a battle-hardened platoon that seizes a Vietnamese farm girl, rapes her and then, in a grisly and clumsy way, murders her. Only one member of the platoon—Midwestern "cherry" Eriksson (Michael J. Fox)—refuses to go along, risking his own life. He doggedly pursues justice in the face of official indifference.

The Vietnamese girl is the most visible victim, but she is also a vehicle leading to the central victims of the war for this film: the American grunts. As De Palma told the *New York Times*, U.S. vets "are all casualties of the war." For him, "the Vietnam experience is the sore that will never heal. So many things hap-

pened to these kids and marred their lives forever, and there's no rational way to explain it."

**Grunt expectations:** *Casualties of War* doesn't even attempt an explanation; its argument is premised on irrationality and its consequences for the grunts. The movie is the climax of the grunt genre that emerged with *Platoon* and now appears to have played out its function

### FILM

and its welcome at the studios (which are moving on to Vietnam-aftermath movies, with *In Country* and *Born on the Fourth of July*). Grunt films refigure the Vietnam war in the

**Focusing on the grunts neatly skirts larger questions of political responsibility.**

field, where all the questions that so rent the social fabric then—Why were we in Vietnam? How did we get there? Should we get out?—are irrelevant.

Suffering movie grunts—and nobody, left, right or center, says real-life grunts didn't suffer—have made an elegant solution to the problem

of producing entertainment on a subject still painfully puzzling in American society. (Listen to George Bush's inaugural address: "That war cleaves us still. Surely a statute of limitations has been reached.")

Focusing on the grunts neatly skirts larger political questions of guilt and responsibility, and reinterprets the war as a personal tragedy—not as a policy debacle that had its own horrific logic (as well as legacies to be found today in such places as Cambodia, Honduras and Nicaragua). Indirectly and poignantly, the movie grunts also express the frustration of American moviegoers who, as citizens, find themselves (like grunts in Vietnam) distant from power but still held accountable for its actions.

**Mourning in America:** *Casualties of War* approaches the theme of these films—mourning for the end of American innocence and righteousness in Vietnam—with spectacularly gory material, and in a way that cleverly lets Middle America off the hook. Its ostensible hero Eriksson—the white, well-spoken, patriotic, religious husband and father from a mom-flag-and-apple pie community—is only a minor casualty. His innocence is shredded, but his values remain intact.

The rest of the platoon members are drawn from the other America: the poor, the disenfranchised, the

oppressed. The movie patronizes them, damning their actions while sympathizing with their plight. They commit their crimes not because they're bad but because they're pushed outside the confines of social constraints, double-crossed both by the enemy and their own superiors. The only black member of the platoon, who fawns over his father-figure, the sergeant Meserve (Sean Penn), is dispatched early in the film. The Hispanic member quickly takes the low road out of fear. Of the two white privates, one is apparently retarded, the other just a mean lumpen-prole. Meserve, on the other hand, is a competent, even admirable leader, whose working-class background is as evident as his courage and his bitter cynicism. He is sabotaged by the same institution that rewarded his ruthlessness.

The film's set-up leads you to think *Casualties of War* might be a morality play, and David Rabe's script certainly has plenty of moralizing in it. For instance, earnest Lutheran Eriksson rails against the callousness of his comrades and the collapse of accountability: "Maybe because we just might be dead in the next split second, maybe it matters more what we do." And the plot holds no surprises, as the righteous recruit does the right thing.

**Sniping at easy targets:** But the movie isn't really about justice. It's about why ordinary American kids could so callously commit atrocities.

The short answer here is: the Vietnamese made us do it. An opening night-battle scene sets up suspense by sticking Eriksson halfway through the roof of a tunnel, with a little weasel of a Viet Cong crawling toward him from below with a knife. Then we move to an idyllic daylight scene in a village, with Eriksson helping a farmer plow a rice field. The scene suddenly turns macabre when a platoon member is suddenly shot through the neck by a sniper that the old farmer must have known was there.

This is betrayal—not only by the Vietnamese but by officers who blandly order the grunts into war against sneaky enemies, on behalf of untrustworthy civilians. The members of the platoon who are "short"—counting down the days to the end of their tour of duty—spew hatred of "these fucking gooks" who are "lowlife, slugs, roaches," who just want to "upgrade their raggedy-ass selves," and of a country that one guy thinks we ought to level and pave. They've been driven to despair by a people that, as the tough Meserve says, "are confused themselves about are they Cong or not Cong."

The grunts are living a nightmare: no wonder they act like characters in a horror movie. The hapless farm girl is nothing more than a means to exorcise their self-consuming rage. As one platoon member says, registering cynical awareness of U.S.

propaganda, "We gotta win her heart and mind—if she's got one."

The camera moves from grandiose pans to sharply subjective closeups. Sometimes it dizzily tilts sharply or shoots from below, wrenching us from one grunt's perspective to the next. The plot sides with the righteous (and sometimes insufferable) Eriksson, but the emotional excitement is in the inexorable horror of the atrocity, pulled along by a grandly solemn and elegiac soundtrack.

**Masters of gore:** Brian De Palma is good at emotional gore. He made his name with films like *Carrie* and *Dressed to Kill*, and has recently come back from bad-movie limbo (*Body Double*, *Scarface*) with *The Untouchables*. He works his suspense and horror gambits here, with scene after scene of violence, rape and torture. He combines a pornography of violence—he clearly had a boy's own extravaganza with fireworks in the battle scenes—with a pornography of pity.

The pornography of pity is the harder to take. Never does the camera dare to take its subjectivity into the Vietnamese girl's perspective, but it does linger on her treatment—including closeups of the gang rape—in ways that compel disgust. The disgust is partly for what is being done to her and partly for your own participation in watching. The girl's death is a particularly cheap thrill—it occurs in brutal stages, ending with a fall from a railroad bridge after an extended bloody walk down the line.

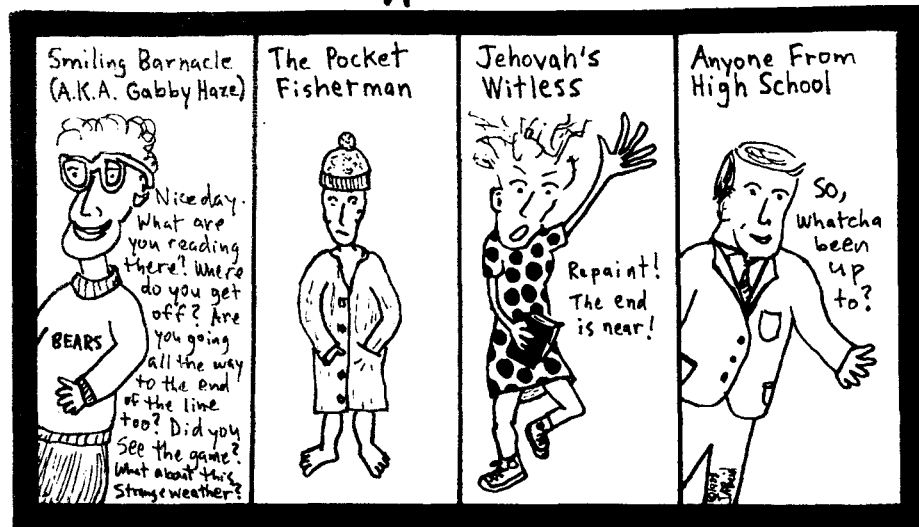
Her death ought to set up the moral crisis of the rest of the film, but there isn't any. Eriksson is, of course, correct in his outrage; his comrades are, sadly, men-made-beasts; the get-along-go-along officers are hiding in the false safety of pragmatism. De Palma doesn't seem to have been much interested in this part of the film.

De Palma's interest appears to rise again at the very end (and please skip this paragraph if you want to be surprised). In a classic De Palmaesque coda, the film flashes forward to a city bus in California, where Eriksson, dozing, recalls an officer's warning that someday the men whose lives he ruined would wreak vengeance on him. He catches the eye of an Asian-American girl who says demurely, "You were having a bad dream, weren't you? I think it's over now."

A bad dream? Over now? Not so easily. The Grand Guignol theatrics of the film's rape-and-murder centerpiece, along with its clumsy denouement, produce not catharsis but a slimy feeling of complicity. *Casualties of War* shows, if nothing else, that the moral questions around wartime atrocity are larger than can be answered by a lurid look at the blood, sweat and tears on the spot.

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## URBAN TIPS: Types to avoid on mass transit





By Pat Aufderheide

**W**E'RE STRIP-MINING OUR children's minds!" said Sen. Al Gore (D-TN) at a congressional hearing July 12 about children's television programming.

"Mm, that's a good phrase," responded Sen. Daniel Inouye (D-HA), head of the communications subcommittee. "I'll make a bumper sticker out of it."

"Well, when you're using children for short-term profit without any regard to the long-term consequences, that is like strip mining," Gore answered.

Inouye and Gore were discussing legislation that is moving fast in both the House and Senate. The legislation would limit the commercial time allowed on children's broadcast TV programming and would make broadcasters show they've offered educational and informational programming for children if they want to renew their licenses.

If that sounds familiar, it should. Until the Federal Communications Commission (FCC) lifted these and other regulations in 1984, broadcasters—who hold their licenses in exchange for acting as trustees of the public interest—had lived with such rules for at least 10 years.

What are legislators so upset about? They're irritated, like they have been for eight years, with the way the FCC has been cheerfully changing the rules without consulting Congress. But they're also concerned about TV and kids.

**Show-and-sell time:** And you can see what they're worried about just by turning on the tube. On commercial TV today, not one educational or informational program is produced for children. Instead, we get shows that are essentially program-length commercials such as *G.I. Joe*, *My Little Pony*, *Jem* and *Gummi Bears*. Programs like these were banned until the Reagan-era FCC eased restrictions, and they've mushroomed since—from 13 in 1983 to 70 now.

Not only the plots of these shows but the designs of accessories and the color schemes are developed to match toy manufacturers' specifications. If you count up all the commercial references and images—like longtime kids' TV activist Peggy Charren did for an episode of *Transformers*—you can find 20 minutes and 48 seconds of product commercial time in a single half-hour program.

It's not just a TV show we're talking about; it's a way of life. By the time an American child graduates from high school, he or she will have spent more time in front of the tube than in class (and if the Whittle Channel 1 scheme goes through, with commercial-laden in-school programs, the distinction may completely erode). Three-year-olds watch 26 to 30 hours of TV a week.

Amid the reruns, syndicated shows and other adult programs they watch along with the program-

## Re-regulating sleazy kid stuff



length commercials, kids see some 12,000 acts of televised violence a year. And it's been official since a 1972 surgeon general's report that there's a relationship between a lot of TV watching and negative behavior in children—especially the poor and troubled. (It's also clear, as Edward L. Palmer shows in his excellent *Television and America's Children: A Crisis of Neglect*, from Oxford University Press, that educational and information programming influences kids positively.)

**Minute buy minute:** The problem isn't just the programming. Broadcasters have boosted the amount of commercial time on children's programming in the years since deregulation. Data from the National Association of Broadcasters (NAB) shows that since deregulation a fifth of the stations in the top 50 markets are averaging more than the former maximum of 12 minutes an hour of commercials.

And the kinds of commercials are changing. For instance, some advertising tells kids to hold the phone up to the TV—so the beep sounds can "dial" a number for the child. Unsuspecting kids calling the "Slime Line" or the "Freddie Pumpkin Horror Line" have spent hundreds of dollars of the family budget before dad and mom got the bill.

"Have these hucksters no shame?" said Sen. Howard Metzenbaum (D-OH) in the July 12 hearing. "Have the broadcasters no shame in airing these obviously unfair advertisements aimed at small children?"

Even less shameless advertise-

ments might be unfair to children. Kids under seven or eight years old, as studies have shown time and time again, cannot make the distinction between ads and programs. They're wide-open territory for the strip-miners of the mind.

**Demographic losers:** Who killed Captain Kangaroo? The answer is simple: greed. Kids have never

### TELEVISION

been a very lucrative audience. They don't usually control the family purse strings (except when they've got the phone next to the TV). Broadcasters got a whiff of the FCC's sentiments in the early '80s and began dumping the demographic losers; between 1979 and 1983, programming for kids on networks fell from 11.3 hours to 4.4 hours weekly.

In the later '80s, as deregulation put stations on the merger-and-acquisition block, prices and debt loads went sky high. Suddenly

**By the time an American child graduates from high school, he or she will have spent more time in front of the tube than in class.**

broadcasters were scanning every part of the schedule to squeeze more dollars out of it. As a result, kids' programming hours were filled with cheapo reruns and toy-related programs, or sold in block time to outside programmers selling weight loss and real estate schemes.

Call it strip-mining, or call it business, or call it the marketplace approach to deregulation. Whatever you call it, it's been bad news for kids.

**Changing channels:** And what about the alternatives, on public TV and in that bright new world of new technologies? When the FCC lifted its kids' TV rules, it celebrated the diversity of options outside of commercial TV for kids. Dale Kunkel, an expert on children's TV, acerbically calls this the FCC's "Disneyland rule" with good reason.

Cable programming, such as Nickelodeon produces, can be both fun and good for kids—if their families have the money for the service. Those families with the budget for VCRs and the money to buy the better videos can get kids videocassettes. But even there, the toy manufacturers have taken over the low-priced part of the video shelf, and advertisers are eating into the front parts of many tapes. As Sen. Tim Wirth (D-CO), sponsor of one of the bills re-regulating children's TV, pointed out, you're really talking not about "options" but about deepening the line between haves and have-nots—and creating a society "that's increasingly ungovernable."

Even public TV offers slim alterna-

tives. Its chronic poverty is visible even in the best of kids' programming. Trusty old *Sesame Street* is getting older by the season, with few programming dollars to produce new shows. Bob Keeshan, erstwhile Captain Kangaroo to generations of children, tried to take refuge in public broadcasting when he was bumped off commercial airtime, but he hasn't been able to make any shows. He's spent all his time trying to raise money.

Besides, most Americans still watch what broadcasters like to call "free TV"—commercial broadcast channels.

**Let's make a deal:** Proposed legislation, even if passed, would not put the U.S. in the category of countries—like England, Japan and Australia—where regulation ensures quality children's programming. (More than 12 percent of BBC-1's schedule is devoted to kids' programming, three-quarters of it produced new annually.) But it would at least bring us back to where we were in 1974.

Identical legislation in the House (H.R. 1677) and Senate (S. 707) would put slightly looser commercial limits on stations than the NAB once mandated (before its industry agreement was struck down as violating the anti-trust laws) and would make kids' programming a condition of license renewal. This is the same legislation that President Reagan nixed last year in a pocket veto, and it has the approval of the NAB (which is crucial to passage).

The bill recently introduced by Sen. Wirth, S.1215, goes further. It requires broadcasters to provide programming specifically designed for children and to so label it on the air. It stiffens the limits on commercial time, including program-length commercials (making them unviewable). The NAB is staunchly opposed.

"Tim's bill is a better bill than my bill," said Sen. Metzenbaum, sponsor of S.707, in the July 12 hearing. He urged the committee to adopt it. In an unusual move, Metzenbaum had also co-sponsored Wirth's bill.

Why? That's what the Republican senators on the committee wanted to know. Metzenbaum explained that he thought Wirth's stronger legislation was needed. "But being a realist, I think it may be far more difficult to pass the Wirth bill," he said. "One represents hope, and the other represents reality."

Wirth, a veteran of kids' TV issues, also seems to know that. And some kids' TV advocates are angry that Wirth has popped up at the last minute to, as one public interest lawyer put it, grandstand and "gum up the works." But Wirth appears to, at the very least, leave his stamp on the process.

The real hope of this session is to pass the "reality." Exciting TV for kids won't blossom instantly as a result. But broadcasters will be forced to serve a part of the audience that can't speak up for itself.

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By Jim Naureckas

**M**OVE OVER, SALMAN RUSHDIE. The latest target of blasphemy charges is seven feet tall, green and very damp.

The July issue of DC Comics' *Swamp Thing* will never appear. The plot, involving the vegetable superhero traveling back in time to meet Jesus, was deemed too sensitive for the title's readers. Rick Veitch, *Swamp Thing*'s writer since 1986, quit the comic over the cancellation of the issue.

Actually, the comic is less a victim of fundamentalist fervor than of corporate greed. No Christian group had objected to the proposed theme, which everyone agrees was handled in a tasteful and reverent manner. But executives at DC's parent company, Warner Communications, edgy over their buyout struggles with Paramount and Time Inc., and worried about the success of their then unreleased Batman movie, gave the project a thumbs down.

**Bat timing:** Warner was not known as a courageous defender of freedom of expression to begin with. Its book division refused on ideological grounds to distribute Noam Chomsky and Edward Herman's *The Washington Connection and Third World Fascism* in 1973. More recently, the company backed out of an agreement with Eclipse Comics to co-publish *Brought to Light*, a congregate-related graphic novel.

Although the company declines comment, Warner is rumored to

## The last temptation of the Swamp Thing



have warned DC president Jenette Kahn to keep a tighter rein on the creative staff after the *Batman* "Death of Robin" series, in which readers could call a 900 number to vote on whether the Boy Wonder lived or died. Following the people's choice, the Joker bludgeoned Batman's sidekick to death with a crowbar. (Ironically, the script portrayed the Joker as working for Rushdie critic Ayatollah Khomeini.)

Apparently, Warner brass feared that identification of Batman with this sort of brutality would hurt ticket sales. Little did they realize that it was Batman's dark edge—the

fact that he can throw villains off Gotham Cathedral without giving it a single thought balloon—that would send box office figures soaring.

### COMICS

*Swamp Thing* covers somewhat different ground. The hero, a sort of elemental demigod, spends less time fighting crime than trying to reconcile his spiritual mission and human nature—much like Martin Scorsese's controversial depiction of Jesus in *The Last Temptation of Christ*. The Christ parallel makes it only natural that, when hostile aliens

sent him hurtling uncontrollably back through time, Swamp Thing would meet up with the real thing.

The script—which was dedicated to Rushdie—called for Swamp Thing to meet up with Jesus in the Garden of Gethsemane, where Swamp Thing assumes the form of an olive tree and witnesses Christ's decision to accept the Crucifixion. Swamp Thing fills the Holy Grail with juice produced by his body, and battles a demon that has been sent to attack the Messiah. But for the most part, the story unfolds the same way that it does in the New Testament. "It is no more blasphemous than *Ben-Hur*," according to a critic who reviewed the script for the *Comic Buyer's Guide*.

**New Age, old problems:** But the mere presence of the Christian deity was too much for DC's Kahn, who after consulting the corporate higher-ups pulled the plug on the issue. Although "the subject was handled with integrity and respect," according to a statement issued by Kahn, "the story concept itself would be offensive to many of our readers."

The *Swamp Thing*'s creative team reacted with dismay to the decision. Veitch, who describes the comic's philosophy as "New Age spiritualism" (he lives just down the road from Windham Hill Records in Vermont), has often brought far more heterodox religious ideas into the comic than in the suppressed story. And other DC horror comics—all of which bear a "suggested for mature readers" warning—have taken even bigger risks, with a

*Hellblazer* story line presenting God, working through a gay-bashing fundamentalist sect, as a villain.

Michael Zulli, who as guest artist had nearly completed the pencil art for the Jesus story, says that the assignment was the first and last time he will work with a major comic book company. "There's a big resistance to truly mature comics written and drawn by adults for people with adult minds," says Zulli, whose *Puma Blues*, a left-leaning comic about ecological disaster, is independently published.

Now that Warner is paying attention to the strange publications of its subsidiary, some worry that the DC line will be forced to rein in the creative experiments that allowed the perennial No. 2 comics company to surpass Marvel in sales. (*Swamp Thing*, rescued from obscurity by Alan Moore in 1983, can be seen as the beginning of the company's renaissance, as Moore went on to work on such groundbreaking series as *Watchmen* and *V for Vendetta*.) Writers shudder at the mammoth communications conglomerate trying to impose some sort of orthodoxy on the convoluted theology of the DC universe.

But perhaps Warner will pay less attention now that *Batman* has gone through the roof. But for some, the golden age is over. "*Swamp Thing* is dead," says Zulli. "The teeth have been pulled." ■

Jim Naureckas is a former staff writer for *In These Times*. He has written as a freelancer for Eclipse Comics.

## High-tech "spin-ons": toast of the future

By Tom Engelhardt

**L**AST FALL THE PENTAGON'S defense Advanced Research Projects Agency (DARPA) announced that it would sink \$30 million into the development of the high-definition TV (HDTV) screen of the future. Unfortunately, the Pentagon's move to support the American electronics industry may be a case of too-little-too-late. Already Japanese and European HDTV consortiums are years and countless millions ahead in the race for the hottest consumer item of the 1990s (whose advanced microprocessors may well be at the leading edge of 21st century military technology).

But according to Pentagon insiders, the DARPA intervention marks a turning point in the relationship between military funding and our high-tech future. They believe we are situated at the beginning of the end of the era in which corporate and university labs raised money for crucial civilian R&D by working on "talking cockpits" and missile technology. The Pentagon's new awareness that American military pre-eminence may rest on "spin-ons" from the civilian economy has

resulted in a fierce intraservice scramble to fund consumer projects. Among these pioneering attempts to fuse Pentagon dollars with the consumer economy are:

**The Midgetman Cold Fusion Popcorn Popper (MCFPP):** The Pentagon's Primary Battle Development Group (PBDG) jumped in feet first on this one as soon as Stanley Pons and Martin Fleischman of the

### HARDWARE

University of Utah announced the discovery of cold fusion in a jar. In a co-patenting agreement with the university and General Electric, PBDG is now preparing the funding that will make America No. 1 in the post-hot-air-popper era. By the first decade of the next century, the Midgetman should have the potential to deliver explosive amounts of butter-flavored popcorn to a movie theater or home several hundred miles away, with a circular hit ratio of plus or minus 10 feet. *Initial Funding:* \$14 billion. *Technical Problems:* An Odeon-Loews consortium, fearing the loss of the \$27 billion popcorn market, is hard at work on an anti-MCFPP defense system that

could intercept the popper early in its flight and divert it to a local airport, where the popcorn would explode harmlessly. *Cost to Consumer:* \$3 million. *Military spin-ons:* Cold fusion technology will power the 21st century war machine. The Polar Bear, a cold fusion battle tank, is already on the drawing boards. *Prognosis:* Experts agree that, barring a goof, U.S. popcorn technology could lead America to global energy dominance.

**The Stealth Toaster:** The Air Force's Aerotechnical Institute (AFAI), in conjunction with Northrop, is rushing to create a "personal toasting apparatus" for the next century. Molded through high-temperature ceramics, the apparatus' contours will be virtually invisible in a projected formica-and-chrome "kitchen of the future." Using micro-miniaturized supermemory chips and artificial intelligence systems, the apparatus will deliver a perfectly cooked and buttered piece of toast to the plate of a waiting breakfaster sight unseen. *Initial funding:* \$225 million. *Technical problems:* Micro-miniaturization. Based on present technology, the toaster package with all its hardware and software would be half a football field in length, necessitating unrealistic and costly changes in kitchen design. *Cost to consumer:* \$2,475,000 or \$1,320 per average toast slice for the typical family of four. *Military spin-ons:*

Stealth Toaster Technology represents our aerospace future. *Prognosis:* The German electronics and publishing conglomerate of Gemeinschaft and Gesundheit has a several-year headstart in resolving basic problems in buttering technology. Otherwise, America is out front on this one.

**Star Wars all-body shades:** The Strategic Defense Initiative's Skywalker Department of Technology (SDT) has just entered into agreement with Ralph Lauren and MIT to create this replacement for sunglasses. An all-body, laser-optics sun "sheath," it will not only offer you total solar protection in an ozone-depleted future but allow you to track, locate, and intercept a car, bus or human being over hundreds

of city blocks. (It will be sold complete with multimodular personalized phone, privatized air conditioning, individualized cruise controls and multichoice entertainment unit). *Initial funding:* \$132 billion. *Technological problems:* none. *Cost to consumer:* \$1 billion. *Military Spin-ons:* You name it, it will provide it. *Prognosis:* A military takeover of the personal appearance industry (PAI) will turn PX's worldwide into cutting-edge fashion boutiques ensuring control over the teenage market for eons to come.

In a gold-rush-like atmosphere, such joint ventures are already sweeping out of the military's grasp. Only last week, for instance, the CIA and toy giant Hasbro embarked on a joint venture to produce an Encrypticon Ninja Codebreaker Ring that would enable advanced Nintendo players to produce their own computer viruses.

If, however, the military does not fall to competition from other branches of the government and these projects succeed, prominent economists in Cambridge, Massachusetts believe that the American century could be extended another two hundreds years, making the Pentagon the most successful entrepreneur in history. ■

Tom Engelhardt, a senior editor at Pantheon Books, would like to thank his stealthy friend Todd Gitlin for R&D support.

**The Midgetman should have the potential to deliver explosive amounts of butter-flavored popcorn to a movie theater or home several hundred miles away.**



## Summit

Continued from page 3

as in the South, is out to shove most of humanity beneath the survival threshold, depriving them even of ... air and water, while the privileged are obliged to shut themselves into fortified enclaves."

Summing things up, economist Alain Lipietz said the meeting had pushed "pessimism of the intellect" even farther than usual, challenging the very concept of progress. He saw space for optimism in the fact that "the system is getting jammed" and the victims themselves have to do something about it. "This first summit could not provide answers. We need symbols. We are able to 'act locally'. But we still need to 'think globally'. We need to make proposals at the global level."

This was where the Paris TOES was weak. About its only concrete proposal was to ban

use of international loans for arms purchases. The demand for an international conference between debtor and creditor nations to find a political solution to the debt crisis skirts the problem of the subservience of both Third World and rich governments to an uncontrolled and uncontrollable economic system.

The poor summit's experts initiated their project for an "observatory" to evaluate G-7 with a resumé of its first 15 years, noting the turning point at the end of the '70s to privatization—transfer of resources from the public to the private sectors. A parallel turn to privatization seems to have occurred on the left. The new "Third Worldism" has abandoned armed liberation struggle aimed at seizing state power in favor of peaceful non-governmental organizations (NGOs), local community organizing and "networking." It is not clear how "international civil society" is to convince the financial centers of West-

ern capitalism to abandon the priority of profit-making. As Lipietz noted, there was frequent reference to "moral force."

Next year, when the G-7 meet in the U.S.,

American organizers of "the other economic summit" will have the opportunity to provide more concrete alternative policy proposals. □

## CALENDAR

Use the Calendar to announce conferences, lectures, films, events, etc. The cost is **\$25.00 for one insertion, \$35.00 for two insertions and \$15.00 for each additional insert**, for copy of 50 words or less (additional words are 50¢ each). Payment must accompany your announcement, and should be sent to the attention of ITT Calendar.

### OAK RIDGE, TN

August 6

The Oak Ridge Environmental Peace Alliance and other co-sponsoring groups present the "NEVER AGAIN: March for Peace and the Environment" action on Hiroshima Day. This action is seen as a major event in this "Year of Resistance." People from diverse backgrounds and understandings will come together to create a large compelling turnout which will nonviolently demonstrate that the issues surrounding peace and the environment can no longer

be ignored. The action will span five days and features a march and nonviolent civil disobedience rally on Sunday, Hiroshima Day. For more information contact Oak Ridge Environmental Peace Alliance, P.O. Box 1101, Knoxville, TN 37901. (615) 588-9370 or (615) 573-2322.

### TORONTO

August 9-13

The 8th Assembly of The Fourth World presents "Decentralist Congress, Making the World Healthy, Happy and Whole" at the University of Toronto, Canada. Featured speakers include Ivan Illich, Leopold Kohr and John Papworth. The Congress will include forums on community economics, organizing for change, bioregions, communication strategies, and profound spiritual transformation. The Fourth World is a movement to enhance the quality of all life in the biosphere through the development of a decentralist philosophy and specific actions. For more information contact The School of Living, 3030 Sleepy Hollow Rd., Falls Church, VA 22042, (703) 237-7507.

### FINDLAY, OH

August 17-20

The Democratic Socialists of America Youth Section will be holding its 14th annual summer conference at Findlay College. Speakers include Barbara Ehrenreich, Reginald Wilson and William Winpisinger. Find out what's happening in the U.S.'s largest progressive/radical youth group and how you can become involved. Scholarships and carpooling are available. Contact Dinah Leventhal, 15 Dutch St., Suite 500, New York, NY 10038, (212) 962-0390.

### PETALUME, CA

August 24-27

The War Resisters League presents its 1989 National Conference "Reclaiming Culture: Nonviolent Responses to Militarism in Our Lives." This conference will examine the militarization of our culture and focus on the many creative efforts we are taking to free ourselves from this weight. Small group discussion topics will progress from militarism in ourselves to resistance, and finally to the demilitarization of our society. Workshops will cover many of the areas pervaded by militarization—from home to community to global levels. For more information contact War Resisters League, 339 Lafayette St., New York, NY 10012, (212) 228-0450.

### MIDDLE EAST

September 23-October 10

"A Pilgrimage of Peace," a Middle East study tour sponsored by New Jewish Agenda of Santa Fe, N.M. A unique opportunity to meet Israelis and Palestinians who care about peace and work together to overcome differences. 1989 cost \$2,000 inclusive from New York. Contact Arline Goldberg, Rt. 14, Box 257, Santa Fe, NM 87505, (505) 471-4861.

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**EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR** for economic justice community organizing non-profit working to build labor religious community alliances to fight plant closures and job loss. Responsible for planning, finances, staff supervision. \$24-28,000. Good benefits. Call or write for detailed job description and requirements. Deadline to apply July 15. Plant Closures Project, 433 Jefferson, Oakland, CA 94607, (415) 834-5656.

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The North American Congress on Latin America (NACLA) has two positions open. **CO-EDITOR**: Work with current Co-Editor on all editorial and production aspects of NACLA's bimonthly magazine, including developing stories, assigning writers and in-house production. Some writing, research and travel. Requirements include agreement with NACLA's perspective, knowledge of South American politics and economics, fluency in Spanish, editing skills and experience, production experience or ability to learn. \$24,000, four weeks paid vacation, medical coverage.

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The NYS Public Employees Federation, AFL-CIO, is seeking to fill the vacancy of **HEALTH PROGRAM ANALYST** in its Albany office. Through the direction of the PEF/NYS Joint Committee on Health Benefits, the Health Program Analyst will conduct studies, analyze and evaluate current and proposed health programs as well as benefits in order to assist the Joint Committee in identifying and coordinating implementation recommendations to develop a continuing cost-effective medical care program. The successful candidate would possess the ability to gather and organize pertinent data,

knowledge of computer terminology and EDP capabilities as well as an ability to apply these skills on a practical level, as well as ability to identify, recognize and develop proposed solutions relating to the studies and strong oral and written communication skills. Salary \$26,625 and a comprehensive employer-paid benefit package. Please send cover letter and resume to: Barbara A. Telasky, NYS Public Employees Federation, AFL-CIO, 1168-70 Troy-Schenectady Rd., P.O. Box 12414, Albany, NY 12212-2414. EOE M/F AA H/V. Deadline for resumes is Aug. 18, 1989.

The Public Employees Federation, AFL-CIO, is seeking to fill the position of **LOBBYIST** to represent PEF's interest and lobby for the Union's legislative agenda and program before the legislature and other appropriate forums. The individual selected will report directly to the President and be headquartered in Albany, N.Y. Qualifications would include a college degree and/or several years' job-related experience and extensive labor background. Key functions would include advising the President, PEF political action committee and appropriate staff on the PEF legislative program interaction with membership, prepare and present PEF position on legislative initiatives, manage Legislative Department, establish, maintain and coordinate tracking system for legislation relevant to PEF political program and other legislation which may be of concern to PEF. Salary \$41,200-51,000. Comprehensive benefit package. Send cover letter and resume to: Barbara A. Telasky, NYS Public Employees Federation, AFL-CIO, 1168-70 Troy-Schenectady Rd., P.O. Box 12414, Albany, NY 12212-2414. Deadline for resumes is Aug. 18, 1989. EOE/M/F/AA/H/V.

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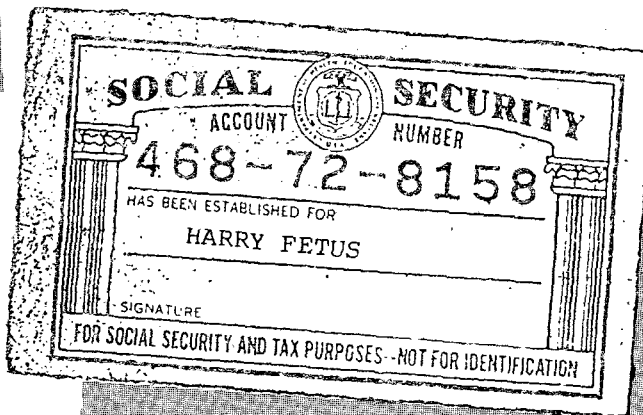
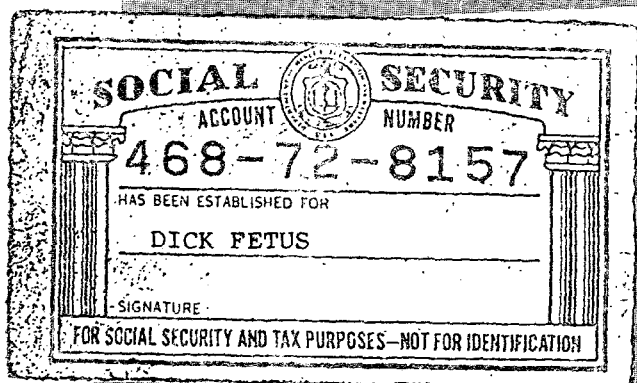
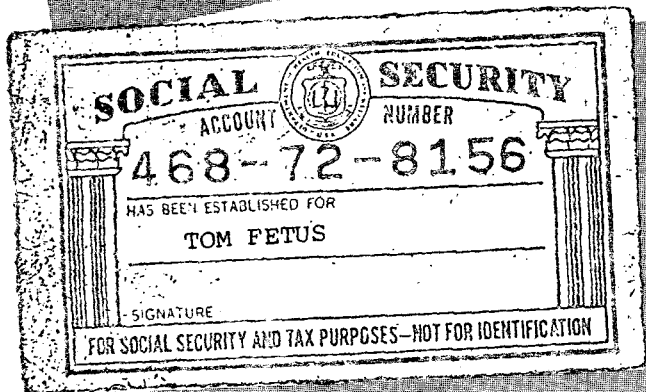
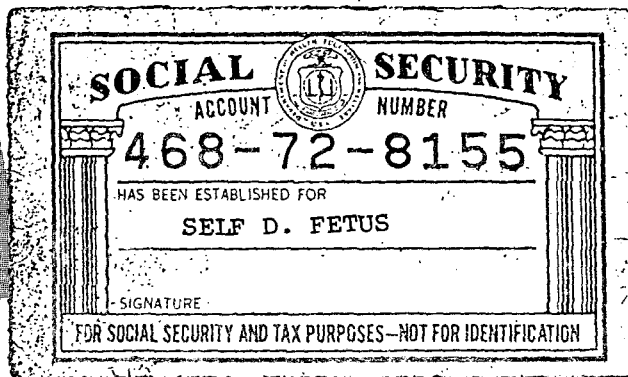
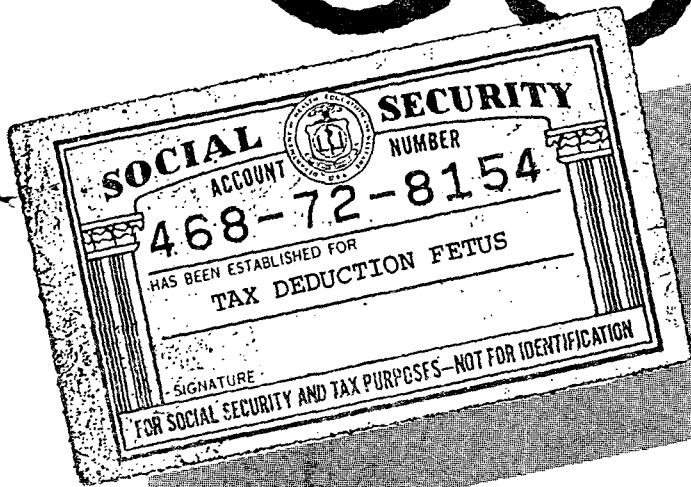
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# SEE YOU IN COURT



The Supreme Court's abortion decision gives birth to a legal morass.

By Peter Wilson and Mary Nick-Bisgaard

Let's go back in time to 1986. In October of that year Sue Ann Yasger, a 29-year-old resident of Fullerton, Calif., was issued a traffic ticket by a California Highway Patrol officer for driving in the carpool lane of the Costa Mesa Freeway without a passenger. Three months later Yasger created a minor media stir in the Los Angeles area by beating the \$52 ticket—she convinced a municipal court judge that her passenger was her five-month-old fetus.

Why recall now a two-year-old incident reported merely as a human interest story on a slow news day? Because the recent U.S. Supreme Court decision in the case of *Webster vs. Reproductive Health Services*, regarding the 1986 Missouri statute designed to overthrow *Roe vs. Wade*, means that judgments like the one in the Yasger case will cease to be amusing anecdotes and

will become headaches for local, state and federal governments for years to come.

Of the several provisions in the Missouri statute reviewed by the high court, perhaps the most controversial is the "non-binding preamble" that states that the life of a human being begins at conception. The court's refusal to rule on the preamble effectively overturns the Court of Appeals' declaration of unconstitutionality and allows it to remain on the books.

**The "sue me" state:** Section 1.205 of the Missouri statutes was written by right-to-lifers Samuel Lee and Andrew Puzder. It states, in part, that the laws of Missouri "shall be interpreted and construed to acknowledge on behalf of the unborn child at every stage of development, all the rights, privileges and immunities available to other persons, citizens and residents of the state."

No doubt legislators saw support of the preamble as a grand yet easy gesture, a way to earn votes among right-to-lifers at little cost to anyone but women of childbearing age. And indeed, pro-choice advocates fear the preamble will be used to make illegal some forms of birth control—

the intrauterine device and birth control pills that work by blocking development of the fertilized egg—and to regulate women's behavior during pregnancy, possibly leading to criminal charges against women who smoke, drink or engage in hazardous work while pregnant. A lower state court judge has already used the law to force a woman to undergo a caesarian section instead of vaginal delivery.

But residents of Missouri and states that would pass similar legislation should take heed. As politicians sow, so shall they reap. Women face new problems now that the unborn children they carry have the same rights as themselves, but the government is also bedeviled by the new legal entity it has created. Because the Supreme Court upheld the preamble, it appears that fetuses in Missouri are now eligible for everything from library cards and parade permits to Social Security payments. The unborn can now own property, hold patents and trademarks, sue and be sued.

Every embryo will now have to be counted in censuses and estimates of per capita

income. Every zygote that fails to implant in the uterine wall, it appears, will require a death certificate. Pregnant women who commit crimes may have to be given their freedom until after the birth of their children in order to avoid a rash of civil suits on behalf of fetuses who have been incarcerated without due process—or the government may have to charge all fetuses as accomplices in their mothers' crimes.

**Zygotes and scapegoats:** Perhaps the outcome least anticipated by the legislature is the changed tax status of the unborn. Now that the life of a Missouri resident has been mandated as beginning at conception, it is a logical consequence that pregnant women claim their preborn offspring as dependents. It would appear that even pregnancies that did not come to term—miscarriages or abortions—would be eligible for exemptions in the same way that governments now give exemptions for children who do not survive a full tax year.

The Supreme Court now allows for significant state restrictions on abortions, but the tax exemptions implied in the Missouri preamble may provide an ironic coping mechanism for some women. Pregnant women may find tax savings for claiming unborn children as dependents sufficient to cover transportation costs to states with easier abortion laws or lower fees.

Providing tax exemptions for all stages of development past the first union of ovum and sperm could prove expensive for government. According to the Rockefeller Foundation, 32 percent of fertilized eggs never implant in the uterine wall, and estimates of implanted fetuses that are naturally aborted run as high as 21 percent. Figure in stillbirths, and all in all there is a 48 percent chance that natural causes will prevent a live birth.

Even with near 50-50 odds that a conception will not result in childbirth, few women would be so callous as to intentionally become pregnant solely for a tax break. Indeed, the technology is not yet in place to detect very early pregnancies; home pregnancy tests can currently confirm only pregnancies longer than 15 days. By that time many eggs have failed to implant and many implanted eggs have been spontaneously aborted—and countless opportunities for exemptions have been lost.

Still, the Missouri legislature may have provided irresistible motivation for a few pharmaceutical companies to develop and market tests for earlier detection of pregnancy. And financially strapped women may eventually find it worthwhile to take frequent at-home tests to reveal short-term fertilizations that probably would not otherwise become apparent but that nevertheless represent substantial tax savings. In time, where taxpayers once saved receipts, women of childbearing age may soon maintain files of notarized little blue-tipped sticks.

If much of this sounds absurd, that is the point. This preamble makes almost anything possible, and it will take time, effort and expense by legislatures and courts at every level of government to rule out even the most ridiculous applications. The Supreme Court's action in the *Webster* case indicates that the Yasger mother and fetus aren't the only ones headed down the wrong road.

Peter Wilson works for the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services in Carmel, Calif.